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# RUDRA-ŚIVA

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Dr. S. Subrahmanya Aiyar Lectures, 1939-40



BY

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UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS

1941



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## PREFACE

The following lectures were delivered by me at the University of Madras in February 1940 under the foundation instituted in the name of Dr. S. Subrahmanya Aiyar. The subject which I have chosen is one of considerable interest, as it deals with the evolution of Śiva, an important member of the Hindu Trinity. Two decades have nearly passed since I first undertook the investigation of the subject at the instance of my brother, the late Mr. N. Raghvayya, M.A. Prof. Ferrand E. Corley and Dr. A. S. Woodburne took a deep interest in my studies, and rendered me valuable assistance by their sympathetic criticism and constructive suggestions. I regret very much that they are no longer in our midst to see the conclusion of an enquiry which was carried on by their encouragement.

Although the origin and development of Śaivism have been dealt with by several eminent scholars both in the East and the West, I believe that a reorientation of the subject is not uncalled for. A dispassionate study of the Vedic literature, freed from the shackles of current theories, is bound to throw fresh and interesting light on the origin of Śaivism. I have ventured to set forth my views, as my investigation has led me to conclusions different from theirs. I take this opportunity to thank the syndicate of the University of Madras for having chosen me as the Dr. S. Subrahmanya Aiyar foundation lecturer, and thus given me an opportunity to sum up the results of an investigation undertaken years ago.

*University Buildings*

*Triplicane, Madras,*

*22nd June 1941.*

N. V. R.







## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the preparation of these lectures, I have made use of the standard English translations of Vedic works. I am greatly obliged to Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri for furnishing me with English translations from German works on Vedic literature, and helping me at every stage in many ways which are too numerous to mention. Mr. S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri, Reader in Indian Philosophy, notwithstanding his scholarly preoccupations, has kindly revised my Ms. and offered me many valuable suggestions for which I am deeply grateful. The late Mr. A. S. Ramanatha Aiyar, Assistant Epigraphist, in the office of the Superintendent of Epigraphy, Southern Circle, read the proofs, in spite of the illness, which ultimately proved fatal, and brought to my notice certain facts I had overlooked. Dr. T. R. Chintamani and Dr. V. Raghavan of the Sanskrit Department gave me considerable help by bringing to my notice evidence hidden in the Vedic and classical Sanskrit literature. I am grateful to these scholars for the readiness with which they helped me, and enabled me to place these lectures before the public. I must not omit in this connection to express my gratitude to Mr. G. Srinivasachari, the Proprietor of G. S. Press for bringing out the book in an excellent manner within a very short period.

N. V. R.



## ABBREVIATIONS

A. B.	:	Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.
A. V.	:	Atharva Veda.
ERE	:	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.
JAOS	:	Journal of the American Oriental Society.
K. B.	:	Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa.
MBh.	:	Mahābhārata.
R. V.	:	Ṛg Veda.
S. B.	:	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.
SBE.	:	The Sacred Books of the East.
T. B.	:	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa.
Taitt. Saṁ.	:	Taittirīya Saṁhitā.
Vāj. Saṁ.	:	Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā.



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## INTRODUCTORY

The belief that the God Śiva worshipped at present by the bulk of the Hindu population is a deity of heterogenous origin who came into existence comparatively late as a consequence of the contact of the faith of immigrant Aryans with that of the indigenous population of the country, particularly the Dravidians, is commonly held by all writers on Hindu religious history. It is stated that the Vedic God Rudra assimilated several indigenous cults, and having gradually undergone a change in the process of assimilation was transformed into a semi-demoniacal deity, known generally by the name of Śiva. The process of this evolution is clearly described by Frazer in his exposition of Śaivism in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*:

"The Puranic account (of Śiva) illustrates the mode of transition from a period of religion based on Vedic tradition and Brahmanic supremacy to a period when it became necessary to recognize the worship of the demoniacal Gods and deified heroes by the outlying non-Aryan Niṣādas and Dravidians who were not allowed to study the Vedas or to perform the Vedic rites. The local shrines with their associated worship of the deified heroes and their appeasing of ghosts and evil-working spirits of the dead by human and blood sacrifices and magic spells, were scattered throughout the villages of India, where the aboriginal primitive ritual was ministered by local sorcerers and priests. As these local shrines became more renowned, they grew in wealth and importance and became endowed by local chieftains and landowners. The shrines became temples wherein the aboriginal deities were raised to new honour and rank as manifestations or servants of Śiva and Viṣṇu or of their Śaktis (or female consorts)."<sup>1</sup>

Rudra became as a consequence of his intercourse with the deities of aboriginal tribes, Śiva who 'with his phallic symbol is more like a Dravidian demon than an Aryan deva.'<sup>2</sup>

1. ERE, 11, p. 91.

2. Griswold: *The Religion of the Rg Veda*, p. 293.



The use of the term Dravidian in this context is rather unfortunate; for, a race of people called the Dravidian is not mentioned in the Vedic literature; and in fact, the Dravidians, as an ethnic group, were unknown to the world until they sprang into existence Athena-wise from the imaginative head of their progenitor Caldwell some two generations ago. What little is known about the religious practices of the Niṣādas, Dasyus and other Non-Aryan tribes from the Vedas does not warrant the conclusion that the Vedic Rudra acquired from them the phallic emblem and demoniacal characteristics which later distinguished the Puranic Śiva.

The characteristics which became the distinctive features of Śiva are thus described by an eminent scholar of the last generation:

"The characteristics of Śiva, or Mahādeva, as brought out by these accounts, appear to be these. He was a powerful, wrathful, and impetuous God, but generous and bountiful, and spared nothing when he was propitiated.....He lived on the Himālaya with his wife Umā, Pārvatī or Durgā, who had a number of other names such as Kālī, Karālī etc., and was attended by a number of beings called his Gaṇas or hosts. His vehicle was an ox.....He is represented as having betaken himself to the process of *yoga*, when he had ceased to be creative..... The object of worship in Śaivism is the *liṅga* or phallus."<sup>3</sup>

This however, is not complete, as it does not include some important features which are usually associated with Śiva in the Puranic account. He is generally represented as the lord of destruction; he inhabited the *śmaśāna* or the cremation ground, adorned himself with a garland of human skulls, ate from them, and danced over the corpses of the dead, surrounded by a host of his demoniacal attendants. He wore braided hair, surmounted by the crescent moon, from which issued the stream of the heavenly Gaṅgā. He had two sons, the elephant-faced, pot-bellied Gaṇeśa, and the six-headed war-God, Kumāra or Kārttikeya.

Śiva is, no doubt, a composite God; but the elements which constitute his personality are found, though in an incipient form in the Veda itself. Although Śiva is said to have assumed his pre-



sent form owing to the intercourse of Rudra (his earlier self) with the Dravidian divinities, the available evidence definitely points out that the attributes which are considered to be the hall-marks of Dravidism are the products of the natural evolution of elements present from the beginning in the Vedic religion. For convenience of investigation, the attributes of Śiva enumerated above may be classified under the following six heads:—

1. (a) His demoniacal qualities, and  
(b) beneficent activities,
2. Personal appearance,
3. Dress, habitation, accoutrements, and vehicle,
4. Names and representations,
5. Family and associates, and
6. Achievements.







## CHAPTER 1

### (a) His demoniacal qualities.

The Vedic literature, specially the Brāhmaṇa portion, embodies several stories which record the birth of Rudra. According to the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, the Gods who were afraid of the evil consequences of Prajāpati's incestuous intercourse with his daughter Uṣas, created Bhūtavān (i.e. Rudra) out of the fearful aspect of their bodies.

"They then put the most fearful bodies (for the Gods have many bodies) of theirs in one. This aggregate of the most powerful bodies of the Gods became a God, 'Bhūtavān' by name."<sup>4</sup>

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* gives a somewhat different account. In one place, Agni-Rudra is said to have been born to Prajāpati by his (daughter) wife Uṣas. "The lord of the beings (Prajāpati), the year, laid seed into Uṣas. There a boy (*kumāra*) was born in a year."<sup>5</sup> In another place, however, Uṣas is said to have borne Rudra not to Prajāpati, but to his four sons, Agni, Vāyu, Āditya and Candramas.<sup>6</sup>

Though these legends differ from one another regarding the parentage and the circumstances of the birth of Rudra they totally agree on one point, viz., that Rudra was one of the younger Gods. Nothing is, however, known from the Ṛg Veda about Rudra's birth, though his identification with Agni may be taken as an anticipation of the Brāhmaṇa legends. Rudra figures in the Ṛg Veda as a group-God; he is said to be the father of the Maruts who are also referred to as Rudras or Rudriyas<sup>7</sup>; they were born to him by the cow Pr̥śni<sup>8</sup>; and their number cannot be fixed definitely as the Vedic texts are at variance. In certain hymns of the Ṛg Veda and the Atharva Veda they are said to be thrice-seven,<sup>9</sup> whereas in

4. Haug: AB. III, 3, 33.

5. SB. VI, 1, 3<sup>8</sup>. Eggeling, SBE. xli, pp. 158-59.

6. *Ibid.*, III, 6.1.

7. RV. 1.38<sup>7</sup>; 2.34<sup>10</sup>.

8. *Ibid.*, 1.23<sup>10</sup>.

9. *Ibid.*, 1. 133<sup>8</sup>, AV. 13.11<sup>8</sup>.



others their number is said to be thrice sixty.<sup>10</sup> In the *Vājasaneyi Samhitā* (16.17) they are said to be countless: "And those (Rudras) that spread over these worlds, countless, by thousands, they are the deities to whom he now offers."<sup>11</sup> Although the Maruts are frequently associated with Indra, they show greater affinity to Rudra.

The Ṛg Veda lays special emphasis on two aspects of Rudra's character. He was mainly a God of destruction, whom none could escape; but at the same time he was kind and beneficent. He was a great healer and skilful physician; and he could even raise up the dead, if he were propitiated by suitable sacrifices. These two aspects of Rudra's character demand careful scrutiny, as they are expected to lead to a clear comprehension of some of the outstanding features of the complex personality of the Puranic Śiva.

Rudra is represented in the Ṛg Veda as a fierce God (1.114<sup>4</sup>), who mercilessly slew all living beings (1.114<sup>7-8</sup>). He was armed with bow and arrows (2, 33<sup>10</sup>, 5.42<sup>11</sup>), with which he shot down his victims. Occasionally he hurled at them a thunderbolt (2, 33<sup>11</sup>); the Atharva Veda and the Brāhmaṇas refer to Rudra's club with which he perhaps smashed men and animals to death (A. V. 1.28<sup>5</sup>, etc., SB 9.1.6.<sup>6</sup>, Taitt. Saṁ. 1.8.6d.). He assumed many forms (RV. 2.33<sup>9</sup>), destroyed the heroes (1.114<sup>20</sup>), and caused disease among cattle (1.114<sup>1</sup>). He was swift and impetuous and spread death on all sides. Cattle-slaying, man-slaying, hero-slaying are some of the epithets that are associated usually with his name (1: 114<sup>7-10</sup>). It is in the later Samhitās and the Brāhmaṇas that the destructive activities of Rudra are brought to great prominence. He was entreated frequently not to harm men but be gentle towards them:

"Unstringing thy bow  
Do thou of a thousand eyes and a hundred quivers,  
Destroying the points of thine arrows,  
Be gentle and kindly to us.

"May the missile from thy bow avoid us on every side,  
and do thou lay far from us this quiver that is thine"

(Taitt. Saṁ. 4.5.1)

10. A.V., 8.85<sup>3</sup>.

11. cf. Taitt. Saṁ. 4.5.1.



The Aryans offered special sacrifices to propitiate Rudra and appease his wrath; they offered him oblations so that they might deliver their descendants from his power (S.B. 2.6.2<sup>9</sup>). They dreaded the God so much that they entreated him to leave their land and depart to far distant countries.

“These, O Rudra, are thy provisions; thereby depart beyond the Mūjavats”

(S.B. 2.6.2<sup>17</sup>).

It is evident that Rudra was the God of Death. He was associated with the spirits of the dead, and the cremation ground, a fact which is clearly brought out by a funeral custom which still survives in South India. On the day of the *asthisāñcayana*, a rude effigy of the departed is made with earth on the site of the pyre, after extinguishing the fire and picking up the bones; and cakes are offered to the deities presiding over the *śmaśāna* including Rudra; moreover, the Maruts, the doughty sons of Rudra, are said to be the carriers of the body of the departed to the abode of Yama (A. V. xviii, 2.22). The Maruts are also included among the *pitṛs*. It may be remembered here that Maruts are also known as Rudras or Rudriyas on account of their birth from Rudra. The *pitṛs* are divided, according to *śrāddha* and *tarpaṇa* ritual, into three classes: Vasus, Rudras, and Ādityas. These are probably identical with the lower, middle and higher classes of *pitṛs* mentioned in the R̥g Veda (10.16<sup>1,2,13</sup>).<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the Vedic texts definitely indicate that Rudra and his army of Rudras (R. V. 2.33<sup>11</sup>) were closely associated with the dead. If Rudra were originally a single deity he must have been the God of Death; and his sons, the Maruts, probably came into existence later to help him in his work. If, on the other hand, there were in the beginning several spirits (like the Maruts) who coalesced subsequently into a single deity, the Maruts must have been primarily the spirits of the dead and Rudra took his place as their leader later. Whatever might have been the process by which Rudra was ultimately evolved, there can be no doubt that he and his sons were associated with the dead from very early times.

12. Of the three classes of *pitṛs* mentioned here, the Ādityas belonged to heaven and the Rudras to the atmosphere. Nothing definite is known about the habitat of the Vasus, though the available evidence seems to suggest that they belonged to the terrestrial region. Their leader Agni was in the main a resident of the earth.



Rudra's association with death explains in a satisfactory manner the demoniacal traits in his character. Rudra, it is said, dwelt with Yama, the king of the dead (Taitt. Sam. 4.5.6<sup>8</sup>) who was, in fact, identical with Śarva, the blue-locked archer (A.V. 6.93<sup>6</sup>); and Bhava, the latter's double, accompanied the messengers of Yama to destroy the enemies of the Aryans. (A. V. 8.8.11). Here we have a satisfactory explanation of the Puranic Śiva's predilection for *śmaśānas*, and his sovereignty over the *bhūtas*.<sup>13</sup> Bhava was armed like Yama with a club (A.V. 8.8.11, 11.2<sup>19</sup>); and Rudra's terrible wide-mouthed dogs which swallowed their prey unchewed (A.V. x, 1.30-Whitney's xi.2<sup>30</sup>) bear a strong resemblance to the two brindled dogs which guarded the gate of Yama's abode (R.V. 10.14<sup>11</sup>, A.V. 18.2.12). Kāla-Bhairava, i.e. Śiva as the lord of destruction, is generally represented as a diety accompanied by a dog; and Yama is said to have assumed the shape of a dog when he accompanied Yudhiṣṭhira during his journey to Heaven (MBh. XVII.3).

(b) *Rudra's beneficent activities.*

Another aspect of Rudra's character may be considered in this connection. Rudra had not only the power to slay and destroy, but he could also raise up the dead by means of his medicines. "Raise up our men by thy medicines, for I hear that thou art the best of all physicians."<sup>14</sup> The nature of the medicines which Rudra dispensed is not specially described anywhere. There is reason to believe that one of the drugs by means of which he cured the afflicted and even raised up the dead, was *soma*, the elixir of immortality. It is said that Manu Vaivasvata, 'our father,' obtained from Rudra pure medicines beneficent and delightful (R.V. 2.33<sup>13</sup>); and he won by sacrifice under Rudra's guidance health and wealth (1.114<sup>2</sup>). The sacrifice performed by Manu was the *soma* sacrifice. He was the first to institute the sacrifice among men, and his sacrifice was the prototype of all the later sacrifices (10.63<sup>7</sup>); Manu set up Agni as a light for all people (1.36<sup>19</sup>); *Soma* flowed for Manu (9.96<sup>12</sup>), and it was brought to him from heaven by a bird (4.26<sup>4</sup>). To comprehend the real nature of Rudra's gift to Manu, it is necessary to keep the dual character of *soma* in mind. *Soma* denoted, in the first place, a plant or a cree-

13. Cf. *ye bhūtānām adhipatayē viśikhāsaḥ kapardinaḥ.*

—Taitt. Sam. 4.5.11.f.

14. *Ud no viraṇ arṇya bhrajaḥ bhīṣakam gaṇābhiṣajām śṛṇomi.*

—R.V. 2.33.4



per that grew on the Mūjavata mountain, from the stalks of which the Aryans brewed a drink largely made use of in their sacrifices. Secondly, it also meant *amṛta* or the drink of immortality, later personified and identified with the moon. Rudra dwelt in the mountains (Vāj. Saṁ. 16.2.<sup>4</sup>), very probably in the Mūjavata itself, and he was called Girīśa, Giritra (Taitt. Saṁ. 4.5.1). The soma plant grew on the slopes of mountains, specially the Mūjavat (R.V. 10.34<sup>1</sup>). He was therefore 'the lord of the soma plants' (Taitt. Saṁ. 4.5.10<sup>a</sup>). That was the cause for the association of soma with Rudra (R.V. 6.74). Soma was *amṛta* (ibid.) which was believed to remove evil and disease from the human body and deliver men from Varuṇa's noose (ibid.). The pure medicine which Manu obtained by the grace of Rudra was in all likelihood soma; it was brought down for him, as stated already, from heaven by a bird (10.99<sup>8</sup>) which was perhaps Agni himself, who was at times spoken of as the heavenly eagle (4.26, 27).

An important fact which is essential to the present discussion must be noticed here. Agni is identified in the Vedic literature with Rudra (R.V. 2.1<sup>6</sup>, A. V. 7.87<sup>1</sup>, Taitt. Saṁ. 5.4.3, 5.5.7<sup>4</sup>, S.B. 6.1.3<sup>10</sup>); and this identification exercised a profound influence on his personality and contributed much to the transformation of his character as Śiva, the auspicious. It follows from this that Agni-Rudra brought soma from heaven and gave it to Manu who drank it and became consequently immortal. The drinking of soma had to be done, however, according to the proper ritual so that it might not lose its efficacious character. This led to the introduction of the fire sacrifice which marked a turning point in the development of the Aryan religion. Manu was, as pointed out already, the first to perform the fire sacrifice (1.36<sup>9</sup>), and he threw open thereby the gates of heaven to mankind. To grasp the real significance of this act, it is necessary to recognise his identity with Yama, the king of the dead.

### *Manu and Yama.*

Although Manu and Yama are generally taken to be two distinct personalities, there are grounds for the belief that they were identical. Both of them were the sons of Vivasvān, whom the Aryans referred to as 'our father' (R.V. 1.80<sup>16</sup>, 2.33<sup>13</sup>, 10.135<sup>1</sup>). Each of them was believed to have been the 'first man,' the progenitor of mankind, and a king. Manu was the first sacrificer (10.14<sup>1-2</sup>). Sacrifice was the path by which the Gods ascended to heaven, and mortals like the Ṛbhus became the immortal Gods.



Manu, therefore, discovered the path of heaven for men by instituting sacrifice among them. Similarly Yama was the first to discover the pathway by which men reached heaven. It is not therefore unreasonable to believe with Griswold that Manu and Yama were 'practically identical.'<sup>15</sup>

The discovery of the pathway to heaven produced revolutionary changes in the social customs of the Aryans, particularly in the manner of the disposal of their dead. The earliest method adopted by the Aryans to dispose of their dead was burial. According to one of the funeral hymns included in the *R̥g Veda* (10.18), the dead man was first asked to 'enter the earth, the widespread earth.' Then followed a request to the earth to protect him 'from the proximity of the evil being,' to allow his breath to 'rise upward (easily)'; to 'be easy of access to him, to treat him kindly and not to oppress him.' She was then entreated to cover him 'even as a mother covers her son with the skirt of her garment.' Finally, the ceremony was brought to an end with a pathetic address to the departed, 'I heap the earth above thee, and placing this clod of earth may I not hurt thee.' This hymn makes it clear that at one time the ancient Aryans were accustomed to bury their dead.<sup>16</sup> They believed that the man continued to live within his grave. He was supposed to breathe, to feel the pressure of the earth, to be hurt by a clod of soil, to be able to hear and understand words addressed to him, and feel the pangs of hunger. He had, in fact, a ghostly sort of existence in his grave which was dependent upon the preservation of the body. The Aryans dreaded very much the dissolution of the dead body, and entreated the mother earth to protect it 'from the proximity of the evil being, *Nirrti* or annihilation.'<sup>17</sup> This was the '*mṛtyoh paṇthā*' (RV. 10.18<sup>1</sup>), the precursor of the *pitṛyāna* or the path of the fathers. The dead were not quite harmless. They might stray out of their graves and injure the living (*ibid*). To prevent the unwary from going too near the grave and sustain injury therefrom, they set up a barrier of stones around it. "Here I place this barrier (of stones) for the living, on this account that no other may go beyond it" (10.184).<sup>18</sup> Moreover, to mark the place of the grave, a

15. *Religion of the R̥g Veda*, p. 325.

16. *The Madras Christian College Magazine*, 1926, p. 95.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

18. Here we have the origin of the stone-circle which the archaeologists are accustomed to treat as prehistoric and non-Aryan. The relative late-



mound of earth surmounted by a pillar was erected upon it (10.18<sup>13</sup>).

The discovery of the sacrifice by Manu-Yama opened the way to heaven for the spirits of the dead. The performance of the sacrifice and the drinking of *soma*, no doubt, threw open to men the portals of heaven. As they had not yet learnt to dissociate the body from the spirit that animated it, they could not conceive of a spirit kicking off its mortal coil, and departing in disembodied state to the world of the Gods. To enable the dead to reach their heavenly destination, they had to be provided with a conveyance capable of transporting them thither. In Agni, the God who brought warmth and cheer to every household, the Aryans discovered the vehicle they needed. They entrusted to him their dead and charged him to carry them across to heaven. To understand why the Aryans chose Agni for the purpose, it is necessary to comprehend his nature and the place he filled in the Aryan religious life.

The term 'messenger' is very commonly applied to Agni in the R̥g Veda. He was the messenger of the Gods who carried the messages to Gods from men. He was generally looked upon as a link that connected heaven and earth. Agni possessed, in fact, some characteristics which eminently qualified him to serve as an excellent messenger. Though a terrestrial deity he was also present in the other regions of the universe. As Agni, the god presiding over the family hearth, he was present in every Aryan household; as lightning (*aśani*) he was present in the atmosphere; and as the sun, the great luminary of the sky, he was present in the heavens. The threefold character of Agni is clearly brought out in one of the hymns of the R̥g Veda. (10.56.<sup>1</sup>).

'Here is one light for thee (i.e. earthly fire, Agni),  
another yonder (i.e., in the firmament, *aśani*), and  
enter the third (i.e., the sun in heaven), and be there-  
with united.'

ness of the hymn, however, makes it difficult to rule out the possibility of the other view altogether. It may also be noted that the burial of urns containing the bones and ashes of the dead, and the erection of sepulchres over them were not unknown to the Aryans. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* gives elaborate instructions about the proper procedure of interring the urns,



It is also said that it was the Agni in the sun that descended upon earth in the form of lightning.

"This is the thunderbolt which often whirleth down from the lofty, mysty realm of Sūrya" (R.V. 10.27<sup>21</sup>).

The essential identity of Agni, Aśani and Sūrya is clearly brought out by Muir in the opening stanza of his 'metrical sketch' addressed to Agni<sup>19</sup>:—

"Great Agni, though thine essence be but one,  
Thy forms are three; as fire thou blazest here,  
As lightning flashest in the atmosphere,  
In heaven thou flameest as the golden sun."

The presence of Agni in all the three regions of the universe was a matter of common observation. He was actually seen as lightning coming down to the earth from heaven. Again, the flames of the fire rose up towards the sky; and the smoke caused by the burning fire ascended to the sky from the earth. The God was thus seen going to and coming down from heaven. He was therefore chosen as the messenger, "commissioned both by gods and by men, to maintain their mutual communications, to announce to the immortals the hymns, and to convey to them the oblations of their worshippers or to bring them down from the sky to the place of the sacrifice."<sup>20</sup> Agni thus became the intermediary between heaven and earth, and conveyed to the immortal Gods the oblations offered by their worshippers and the hymns composed in their honour by the bards. When these ideas came to be widely accepted, the importance of the messenger-God naturally increased. The road connecting earth and heaven was laid upon sure foundations; and henceforward the communications between the two worlds were carried on without hindrance.

Men could not so far share the bliss of heaven, because they knew no way of reaching it. Now that they found in Agni a God who traversed frequently along the unknown path between heaven and earth, could he not be persuaded to guide them to the world of the Gods? He carried to heaven the oblations offered to the gods by men; would he not carry also the dead, if they were similarly offered as oblations in the fire? This train of thought led to radical changes in the funeral practices of the Aryans. The

19. Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, V, p. 221.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 201.



hope of reaching heaven after death induced them to abandon the time-honoured custom of interment, and adopt, in its place, cremation. The dead were not merely consigned to the flames to become a prey to Agni Kravyāda; precautionary measures were taken to ensure their safety. In the first place, a cow (*anustaraṇī*)<sup>21</sup> or a goat was sacrificed, and its omentum was placed upon the dead body in different places, and the hide was used as a sort of covering to protect it from the fire.

“Shield thee with the hide against the flames of Agni; encompass thee about with fat and marrow. So will the bold one eager to attack thee by his fierce glow, fail to girdle and consume thee.” (R. V. 10.16<sup>4</sup>).

Agni was entreated not to burn the dead man, nor cause him pain, and was requested to be satisfied with the animal that was sacrificed.

“Agni! consume him not entirely; afflict him not; scatter not (here and there) his skin nor his body.....”

“The goat is thy portion, burn that, Agni! with thy heat; let thy flame, thy splendour consume it; with those glorious members which thou hast given him, O Jāta-vedas, bear him to the world of the Virtuous” (R. V. 10.16<sup>4</sup>).

Secondly, the bodies of the dead were offered as a sacrifice, so that Agni was constrained to convey them to heaven. The cremation ceremony was described in later Vedic literature as *antyesti*, or the last sacrifice, that is to say, the sacrifice of the dead body in the fire. Agni, as *havyavāhana*, had to carry to the Gods the oblations offered to them by men. It was an important part of his duty. Though he consumed everything, he had to carry the oblations offered to the Gods intact. The dead man himself was the offering; he was offered up in Agni so that the god might carry him to heaven. This is clearly explained in one of the funeral hymns of the Atharva Veda 18.4<sup>13-15</sup>.

“The sacrifice goes, extended, adapting itself (?*kṛip*), [taking], him who hath sacrificed, unto the heavenly (*svarga*)

21. The cow, which is mentioned as a substitute for the goat, was the portion of Rudra, the lord of the cows (*gopati*), (Taitt. Saṁ. 1.1, cf. SB. 13.3.4<sup>2</sup>). Agni Svīṣṭakṛt was Rudra and a *gomṛga* (cow) was offered to Rudra so that he might not harm cattle.



world; let the fires enjoy it, made a whole oblation; let the Jāta-vedases making done here him that is Prajāpati's (and) sacrificial, not throw him down."

"Agni, thine invoker, Br̥haspati, thine officiating priest, be an Indra on the right thy supervising priest (*brahman*) ; this offered sacrifice being completed (*samsthita*), goeth where is the ancient tract of those offered."

It is therefore evident that the cremation ceremony was regarded as a sacrifice. 'To burn the body of the deceased,' says Lanman, 'was accordingly an act of solemn sacrifice, which made Agni its bearer to the other world, the future dwelling of its former possessor.'<sup>22</sup> The body offered in fire was conveyed to heaven by Agni (RV. 10.16<sup>4</sup>) who according to the *Vājasaneyi Samhitā* assumed the form of a bird. (18<sup>51-52</sup>).

"With power, with butter, I attach Agni, the celestial bird, mighty in energy, through him may we go to the sphere of the Sun, ascending the sky to the highest heaven. Borne by those, thine undecaying, flying pinions, wherewith thou, Agni, slayest the Rākṣasas, may we soar to the world of the righteous, whether, the ancient, earliest-born ṛṣis have gone."<sup>23</sup>

In another place (Vāj. Sam. 18.4<sup>10</sup>) Agni is said to have assumed the form of a horse. According to the Atharva Veda (18.2.21<sup>6</sup>), the dead were carried up to the highest heaven, not by Agni but by the Maruts; but this does not make any material difference, for the Maruts, as the sons of Rudra, were identical with Agni (R.V. 2.1<sup>6</sup>).

The heaven to which the dead were taken by Agni was the world of Savitr̥. It was in the third heaven, in the inmost recess of the sky, where the fathers dwelt (R.V. 9.113<sup>8-9</sup>) at the highest step of Viṣṇu, the abode of eternal light (10.15<sup>3</sup>, 1.154<sup>5</sup>). The Aryans appear to have chosen 'the sphere of the sun' as heaven for two reasons. It was, in the first place, the world of the Gods, where stood the mansion of Viṣṇu (1.154<sup>5</sup>). Secondly, the Sun was, as pointed out already, identical with Agni, who therefore carried the dead to his own world. This idea is clearly expressed in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* (3.10.11<sup>1</sup>).

"One man departing from this world knows himself, 'This is I myself.' Another does not recognise his own world. Bewildered

22. Whitney: *Atharva Veda*, II, p. 875.

23. *Mun. J. Original Sanskrit Texts*, V, p. 299. Digitized by eGangotri



by Agni, and overcome by smoke, he does not recognise his own world. Now, he who knows this Agni-Sāvitṛa, when he departs from this world knows himself that 'this is I myself.' He recognises his own world. This Savitṛ carries him to the heavenly world."<sup>24</sup>

Agni took charge of the dead entrusted to him; the Maruts (Rudras) who were Agnis in the atmosphere, bore them up to heaven, and Savitṛ, the Agni of the heaven, accommodated them permanently in his own world. The co-ordination of the world of the gods with that of the dead was thus brought about; and Yama (Manu) was the first pioneer who showed to the fathers the path that leads to heaven (*devayāna*). He is said to have chosen death and abandoned the body (10.13<sup>4</sup>) for the good of men. Perhaps, he offered himself as a sacrifice in Agni and was consequently borne up by the latter to the world of Gods. The pitṛs followed him to heaven where they settled down permanently under his control (10.135<sup>1</sup>)<sup>25</sup>.

The gift of the pure medicine bestowed by Rudra on Manu (Yama) turned out a great boon to mankind. It released them from confinement in the clay-houses of the graveyard (R.V. 7.89), and sent them on a heavenward journey to find a permanent home in Viṣṇu's world of eternal light. Rudra, destroyer and slayer as he was, blocked the path of death (*mṛtyoḥpanthāḥ*) and assuming the form of Agni led the way to the world of the Gods (*devayāna*).

24. Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*: V, pp. 298-9, fn. 450.

25. Macdonell: *Vedic Mythology*, p. 172.



## CHAPTER 2

### *Personal Appearance.*

**Three Eyes:** The Vedas furnish so many details about the personal appearance of Rudra that it is hard to believe that he was not represented in some visible form. The complexion of his body is said to have been ruddy (*piṅgala*), copper-coloured (Vāj. Saṁ. 16, 7) or brown (R.V. 2.33<sup>5</sup>); it shone like the brilliant Sun, 'refulgent as bright gold' (1.43<sup>5</sup>); his belly was black, and his back red (A.V. 15.17<sup>-8</sup>); his neck was black; and his hair and tresses were green (Taitt. Saṁ. 4.5.2<sup>e</sup>; 4.5.8<sup>g</sup>), though at one place his tuft is said to have been black (A. V. 2.27<sup>6</sup>). He wore braided hair (R.V. 144<sup>1-5</sup>) and adorned himself with a bright multi-coloured necklace (2.33<sup>10</sup>); his limbs were firm and lips beautiful; and his face, eyes (A. V. 11.2<sup>5</sup>) mouth, teeth, tongue, and nose (11.2<sup>8</sup>) as well as his 'golden arms' (Taitt. Saṁ. 4.5.2<sup>a</sup>) are mentioned in the later Saṁhitās.

The Vedic Rudra is frequently invoked as *sahasrākṣa*, 'thousand eyed,' an epithet by which Indra was commonly known in later literature. The Vedas do not even remotely allude to the three eyes which became a distinguishing feature of Śiva in the Purāṇas; their origin can, however, be traced to Vedic sources. In one of the hymns of the Ṛg Veda (7.59<sup>12</sup>), Rudra is addressed by the name Tryambaka, a term, the exact significance of which is not known definitely. The earliest interpretation of the name is found in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, according to which Tryambaka denotes Rudra coupled with the woman Ambikā.

"Ambikā, indeed, is the name of his (Rudra's) sister; and this share belongs to him conjointly with her; and because that share belongs to him conjointly with a woman (*strī*) therefore, (these oblations) are called Tryambakā."<sup>26</sup>

26. Eggeling: SB (SBE, xii), 2.6.29. *Ambikā ha vai nāma asya svasā | tasyā 'sya eṣa saha bhāgaḥ | tad yad asya eṣa strīyā saha bhāgas tasmāt Tryambako nāma.*

Modern scholars, however, understand the term differently. Roth and Bothlingk take it to mean 'having three wives or sisters' (*Sanskrit-Wörterbuch*, iii. pp. 456-9). Max Muller and Macdonell



When Rudra, however, rose to prominence, as the supreme God of the universe, a sister did not well accord with his new position; for, a sister postulated parents, and a supreme God from whom all things had originated could not have been himself born of parents. A reconsideration of the problem became necessary; and several new interpretations, more consistent with the new exalted position of Rudra were advanced. It is stated in the *Harivaṁśa* that Rudra was called Tryambaka as he was the foundation of the three worlds.

"Because the God is the foundation (*pratiṣṭhāna*) of the three worlds, again because he of immeasurable fame is the cause of the worlds, therefore Tryambaka."<sup>27</sup>

A different interpretation was advanced by Sāyana. Mahādeva, according to him, was called Tryambaka because he was the father of the Gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra.<sup>28</sup> This interpretation is of doubtful validity; for, Mahādeva was not known until the time of the later Saṁhitās. Moreover, his paternity of the Gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra was not discovered before the birth of the sectarian creeds, long after the age of the Vedas. Meanwhile, the application of the term *ambaka* in a sense unknown hitherto gave rise to a new interpretation. 'Ambaka' denotes in classical Sanskrit, 'an eye', though it is hard to determine its etymology in this sense. In the light of the new signification, which the word had acquired, Tryambaka was reinterpreted as 'the three-eyed.'<sup>29</sup> This interpretation gained wide acceptance, and Rudra who was transformed by this time into the Puranic Śiva developed accordingly his terrible third eye, and concealed in it Agni, his former

interpret it as 'having three mothers' (*Vedic Hymns*, II, SBE, xxxii, p. 389, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 74); and Keith believes that it may mean 'having three sisters or mothers.' (*Religion and Philosophy of the Veda*, I, p. 143).

27. *Harivaṁśa*, 1579, 4332. *Bhūmitrayāṇām deva yasmāt-pratiṣṭhā punar-lokānām bhāvano 'meyakīrtiḥ*.

28. *Rg Veda Saṁhitā* (Max Muller), IV, p. 939. "*Tryāṇām Brahma-Viṣṇu Rudrāṇām ambakam pitaram yajāmaha iti*"; but commenting on SB ii 6.2.9, he gives a different interpretation. "Because this portion has been assigned to Rudra together with lady Ambikā, therefore, these oblations to Rudra on account of their being associated with Ambikā, a lady, are known by the name of Tryambakas." [SB (with Sāyana's Comm. *Bib. Ind.* Calcutta, 1906) II, p. 387.].

29. Cf. Muller: *Vedic Hymns*, Vol. II (SBE, xxxii), p. 389.



second self, the Sun and the Moon having already taken possession of his two normal eyes.<sup>30</sup>

**Blue Neck.**—Another characteristic feature of Śiva is his blue neck (*nīlagrīva*). The Puranic explanation of this peculiarity is too well known to need special mention. How Vāsuki, the serpent king at the time of the churning of the milk ocean for *amṛta*, vomited *hālāhala* which enveloped the world in a destructive conflagration, and how Śiva to save the world from destruction swallowed that poison and kept it in his gullet so that it might not devastate the worlds and thereby acquired the blue mark on his throat, are incidents familiar to the students of the Purāṇas. Though the legend is not found in pre-Puranic literature, the elements necessary for its developments are found in the Veda. The Ṛg Veda gives an account of the powers of a long-haired Muni who drank poison in the company of Rudra (RV. 10.136<sup>7</sup>); and the Yajur Veda (Vāj. Sam. 16.7) alludes to the latter's blue neck (*nīlagrīva*). The authors of the Purāṇas established a connection between these two facts, and invented the legend mentioned above. It is, however, doubtful whether these facts had any real connection between them. Rudra's blue-neck (*nīlakaṇṭha* or *śitikaṇṭha*) like his other features of similar character such as his blue tuft (A. V. 2.27<sup>6</sup>), braided hair (*kaparda*) (R. V. 1.114<sup>1-5</sup>), and black belly and red back, must have been due to his identity with Agni. His blue neck represents perhaps the column of smoke rising up from the fire and the *kaparda* the same column spreading out in the atmosphere. His dazzling form, ruddy or copper-coloured complexion (1.114,<sup>5</sup> Vāj. Sām. 16; 7), his hundred heads, (S. B. ix, 1.16-7), multiform appearance (2.33<sup>9</sup>), golden hue (1.43<sup>5</sup>), and golden ornaments (2.33<sup>9</sup>) must be traced to the same source. His black belly probably stands for charcoal or faggots, and the red back the burning flame.<sup>31</sup> This is clearly shown by the introductory passages of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (ix. 1.1.1-2) giving a complete explanation of the *Śatarudrīya* where most of these attributes of Rudra are mentioned:

30. Of the Eka Vratya who is identified with Mahādeva in the Atharva Veda, it is said (15.18<sup>2</sup>), 'As for his right eye, that is yonder Sun (*Āditya*); as for his left eye, that is yonder Moon.' Whitney, *Atharva Veda*, II, (H.O.S. VII), p. 791.

31. Cf. Weber: *Indische Studien*, ii, 19-22 (published in 1853, quoted in Muir's *Original Sanskrit Texts*, IV, pp. 397-8). The epithets '*nīlagrīva*' (= *nīlakaṇṭha*, spoken of smoke) *śitikaṇṭha*, *hiraṇya bāhu* (of flame), *sahasrākṣa* (of sparks), *paśupati* (of sacrificial victims), *śarva* and *bhava*, etc., belong to the fire.'



1. 'He then performs the *Satarudrīya* offering. This whole of Agni has now been completed: he, now, is the deity Rudra. Upon him the gods bestowed the highest form of immortality. Flaming there he stood long for food. The gods were afraid of him lest he should hurt them.

2. They spake, "Let us gather together food for him; there-with we will appease him. They gathered for him that food, the *Satarudrīya*, and thereby appeased him....."

There need be no hesitation, therefore, in tracing these characteristics to Rudra's identity with Agni.

*Garland of skulls*: The Vedic Rudra was, as stated already, a god of death. It may be presumed that he also lived in the *śmaśāna*, attended by the dark unwholesome creatures that haunted the burial ground. He did not, however, dance over a corpse, wearing a necklace of skulls; nor eat from a dish fashioned out of a skull; but Rudra had a necklace; '*arham niṣkam yajatam viśvarūpam* (2.33<sup>10</sup>). *Niṣkam viśvarūpam* mentioned in this verse has been rendered into English variously.<sup>32</sup> Probably it refers to a necklace of beads of several colours. The drinking cup containing poison alluded to in R. V. 10.136<sup>7</sup> perhaps belonged to Rudra. These were converted in later ages into the gruesome necklace and eating dish of skulls, owing to the influence of the Pāśupatas who were already active at the time when the Upaniṣads were composed.

32. Max Muller : 'variegated chain' (*Vedic Hymns* II (SBE, xxxii), p. 427.

Macdonell : 'glorious multiform necklace' (*Vedic Mythology*, p. 74).

Griswold : 'coloured necklace' (*Religion of the Rg. Veda*, p. 294).

Muir : 'glorious necklace of every form' (*Original Sanskrit Texts*, IV, p. 309).



## CHAPTER 3

### (a) Dress

*Hide Garment.*—One of the names Śiva enumerated by the lexicographer Amarasiṃha is Kṛttivāsaḥ which the commentator explains as '(he) of skin garment.'<sup>33</sup> The circumstances in which Śiva came into possession of this article of apparel are described in some of the Śaiva-Purāṇas, according to which Śiva having slain the *asuras* called Gaja and Vyāghra, flayed their dead bodies and put on their skin. The Gaja and Vyāghra *asuras* were invented by the authors of Śaiva-Purāṇas to explain the origin of a name which was not intelligible to them. Kṛttivāsa is, as a matter of fact, an ancient attribute of Rudra, found in the Vedas. It occurs in the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā* (3.61)<sup>34</sup> and was perhaps not unknown to the Ṛg Vedic Aryans; for, according to the Ṛg Veda (1.166<sup>10</sup>), the Maruts, the sons of Rudra, wore 'on their shoulders speckled deer-skins'<sup>35</sup>. The reasons for investing Rudra with a skin garment is thus accounted for in the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* (2.6.2<sup>17</sup>).

"Clad in a skin"—whereby he (the sacrificer) lulls him to sleep; for, while sleeping he injures no one: hence he says, 'clad in a skin.'<sup>36</sup>

It is therefore evident that Rudra was asked to cover himself with a skin garment, according to the custom of his worshippers at that time, preparatory to retirement for sleep. The skin (of deer) was used as an article of ceremonial dress by the Vedic Indians, a fact which is clearly brought out by the definition of the *yajñopavīta* given in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*.

"After having covered the body from the left to the right with a skin or a cloth, the right arm should be raised above the garment and the left kept underneath; this (mode of dressing) is called the *yajñopavīta*."<sup>37</sup>

33. Kṛttih carma vasaḥ yasya saha.

34. Avatata-dhanvā pināka vasaḥ kṛtti-vasaḥ ahimsan naḥ śivo 'tithi.

35. Max Muller: *Vedic Hymns*, Vol. II (SBE, xxxii), p. 210.

36. Eggeling: SBE, xii, p. 443.

37. Ajñam vāso vā uttarataḥ upavīya dakṣiṇam bāhum uddharate avadhatte savyam iti yajñopavītam.

Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, II, 1.1.

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I am obliged to Mr. G. Harihara Sastri for this reference.



The *yajñopavīta* was not the same kind for all classes of the Aryans; it varied with their *varṇa* or caste—a Brāhmaṇa, according to the *Āśvalāyana Gr̥hya Sūtras*, "should wear the skin of an antelope (*aīṇeya*), the Kṣatriya the skin of a deer (*raurava*) and Vaiśya the skin of a goat (*ajina*).” The Āpastambīya Sūtras restrict the *aīṇeya* to that of a black antelope.<sup>38</sup> Max Muller suggests that skins of animals, such as the deer, constituted ‘the earliest dress of the Vedic Indians,’<sup>39</sup>—a suggestion which cannot be accepted without modification, for there is ample evidence in the Vedas that the Aryans made use of woven cloth, probably of cotton as well as other material, for dress.<sup>40</sup>

It is not, therefore, unlikely that the Vedic Aryans made use of cotton, woollen, and linen fabrics for dress, and that the skin garments which they put on on ceremonial occasions and invested their Gods with, were the survivals of a past when they were unacquainted with the art of weaving or what is more likely, resided in a cold country like northern Persia, Central or Western Asia. Rudra, one of the Aryan deities, who was invested in skin garments, perhaps entered the Aryan pantheon, when they were dwelling in a cold country somewhere outside the frontiers of India.

### (b) Mountain Habitation.

The residence of Śiva, according to the Purāṇas, is situated upon the Mount Kailāsa in the north-eastern quarter. This region appears to have been allotted to him when the heavenly polity was reorganized sometime during the Puranic age. Rudra, the earlier counterpart of Śiva, resided, no doubt, in the mountains; he was called ‘the dweller of the mountain (*giriśanta*, *gīrīśa*—Vāj. Sam. 16.<sup>2-4</sup>), the lord of the mountain (*giritra*, *ibid.* 3) and the haunter or turbaned wanderer of the

38. Max Muller: *Vedic Hymns*, II, (SBE, xxxii), p. 232.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *prākāśāvadhvaryave dadāti* ..... —Taitt. Sam., 1.8.18.1.  
*vāsasī neṣṭāpotr̥bhīyām*  
*kṛṣṇam vāsaḥ kṛṣṇatūṣam* —*Ibid.*, 1, 8, 1, 1.

The term ‘*tantu*’ meaning thread, specially ‘warp’ of a piece of weaving, and ‘*otu*’ denoting ‘woof’ are both met with in the Atharva Veda which is generally believed to be as ancient as the R̥g Veda.

—*Vedic Index*, I, p. 298.



mountain (*gīricara*—*ibid.*<sup>22</sup>); but the mountain was not the Kailāsa, nor was it situated in the north-eastern quarter. The Yajur Veda and its Brāhmaṇas suggest that the mountain where Rudra resided and wandered about was the Mūjavat (Vāj. Saṁ. 3.61, Taitt. Saṁ. 1.8.6.2), which was situated in the north somewhere outside the pale of the Aryan territory. Besides Rudra, Takman (fever) with his brother Balāsa, his sister Kāśikā (cough) and his nephew Pāman (scab) lived, according to the Atharva Veda, in the environs of the mountain :

"His (Takman's) abode are the Mūjavats, his abode are the Mahāvṛṣas. As soon as thou art born, O ! Takman, thou sojournest among the Bāhlikas.

"Go, Takman, to the Mūjavats, or far away to the Bāhlikas ..... Passing (us) by, O friend, devour the Mahāvṛṣas, and the Mūjavats. We point out to Takman these or those alien regions.

Takman, along with thy brother Balāsa, and with thy sister Kāśikā and with thy nephew Pāman depart to that foreign people."<sup>41</sup>

This passage makes it quite clear that the Mūjavats, Mahāvṛṣas, and the Bāhlikas were 'foreign people' living in 'alien regions' outside the boundary of the country occupied by the Aryans. Of these the Bāhlikas were the farthest, and the Mūjavats lived in the region between them and the Aryans, as shown by the sentence, *Takman Mūjavato gachcha Bāhlikān va parastaram*. Now, the country occupied by these people must have been situated to the north of the Aryan land of the Ṛg Vedic times; for, Rudra was requested, as stated above, to depart beyond the Mūjavats, and his quarter, according to the later Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas, was the north.<sup>42</sup> It follows from this that the original home of Rudra was in some foreign country in the north, probably that of the Mūjavats and the Mahāvṛṣas; for, in the first place, Mūjavat was the name of a people as well as that of a mountain (R.V. 10.34<sup>1</sup>) situated evidently in the land of the Mūjavats, and as Rudra, the dweller and the wanderer in the mountains, was asked, as stated already, to depart beyond the Mūjavats, it is not unlikely that the Mūjavat was the place of his habitual residence.

41. A.V. v. 22.5.7.8.12.; Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, ii, p. 351.

42. Taitt. Saṁ. 2.6.6.; SB. 2.6.2.5. In one place, however, (Taitt. Saṁ. 5.2.5.3) Rudra is also associated with the east; but this is an exception.



Secondly, the Mahāvīṣas who are coupled with the Mūjavats had probably some special connection, as suggested by their name, with bull, the emblem of Rudra who was spoken of as *vṛṣabha* (RV. 2.33) and *gopati* (Taitt. Saṁ. 1.1.1.) and of whom the *gomṛga* was a favourite victim (SB. 13.3.4.3). Moreover, Takman and other diseases, by means of which Rudra slew people are said to have been born in the land of the Mūjavats and the Mahāvīṣas and sojourned among the Bāhlikas. It is not therefore improbable that the home of Rudra was situated in the midst of these peoples who seem to have dwelt in the environs of the Mount Mūjavat, the prototype of the later Kailāsa.

Two other features of Śiva which he acquired by his residence on the mountain may be considered here with advantage. Śiva is frequently referred to in the Purāṇas and later Sanskrit literature as Candrasāekhara, Candramauli, Candracūḍa, etc., that is the god who bears the Moon on his head or tuft. Several unconvincing stories are narrated in the Purāṇas to explain how Śiva came to carry the Moon on his head; none of them gives a reasonable and satisfactory explanation. The association of the Moon with Śiva can best be explained with reference to soma which played an important part in the religious life of the Vedic Aryans. Soma was a plant which grew upon the mountains specially the Mūjavat (RV. 10.34<sup>1</sup>), from the juice of which the Aryans brewed a drink largely made use of in their sacrifices. Soma was also personified and elevated to the rank of a god; and his deification, according to Whitney, took place under the following circumstances:—

“This plant, which by its name should be akin to our common milk-weed, furnishes like the latter an abundant milky juice, which when fermented, possesses intoxicating qualities. In this circumstance it is believed, lies the explanation of the whole matter. The simple-minded Aryan people whose whole religion was a worship of the wonderful powers and phenomena of nature, had no sooner perceived that this liquid had power to elevate the spirits, and produce temporary frenzy, under the influence of which the individual was prompted to, and capable of, deeds beyond his natural powers, than they found in it something divine: it was to their apprehension a God, endowing these into whom it entered with God-like powers; the plant which afforded it became to them a king of plants.”<sup>43</sup>

43. JAOS, iii, p. 299.



mountain (*gīricara*—*ibid.*<sup>22</sup>); but the mountain was not the Kai-lāsa, nor was it situated in the north-eastern quarter. The Yajur Veda and its Brāhmaṇas suggest that the mountain where Rudra resided and wandered about was the Mūjavat (Vāj. Saṁ. 3.61, Taitt. Saṁ. 1.8.6.2), which was situated in the north somewhere outside the pale of the Aryan territory. Besides Rudra, Takman (fever) with his brother Balāsa, his sister Kāśikā (cough) and his nephew Pāman (scab) lived, according to the Atharva Veda, in the environs of the mountain :

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“Go, Takman, to the Mūjavats, or far away to the Bāhlikas ..... Passing (us) by, O friend, devour the Mahāvṛṣas, and the Mūjavats. We point out to Takman these or those alien regions.

Takman, along with thy brother Balāsa, and with thy sister Kāśikā and with thy nephew Pāman depart to that foreign people.”<sup>41</sup>

This passage makes it quite clear that the Mūjavats, Mahāvṛṣas, and the Bāhlikas were ‘foreign people’ living in ‘alien regions’ outside the boundary of the country occupied by the Aryans. Of these the Bāhlikas were the farthest, and the Mūjavats lived in the region between them and the Aryans, as shown by the sentence, *Takman Mūjavato gachcha Bāhlikān va parastaram*. Now, the country occupied by these people must have been situated to the north of the Aryan land of the Ṛg Vedic times; for, Rudra was requested, as stated above, to depart beyond the Mūjavats, and his quarter, according to the later Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas, was the north.<sup>42</sup> It follows from this that the original home of Rudra was in some foreign country in the north, probably that of the Mūjavats and the Mahāvṛṣas; for, in the first place, Mūjavat was the name of a people as well as that of a mountain (R.V. 10.34<sup>1</sup>) situated evidently in the land of the Mūjavats, and as Rudra, the dweller and the wanderer in the mountains, was asked, as stated already, to depart beyond the Mūjavats, it is not unlikely that the Mūjavat was the place of his habitual residence.

41. A.V. v. 22.5.7.8.12.; Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, ii, p. 351.

42. Taitt. Saṁ. 2.6.6.; SB. 2.6.2.5. In one place, however, (Taitt. Saṁ. 5.2.5.3) Rudra is also associated with the east; but this is an exception,



Secondly, the Mahāvṛṣas who are coupled with the Mūjavats had probably some special connection, as suggested by their name, with bull, the emblem of Rudra who was spoken of as *vṛṣabha* (RV. 2.33) and *gopati* (Taitt. Saṁ. 1.1.1.) and of whom the *gomṛga* was a favourite victim (SB. 13.3.4.3). Moreover, Takman and other diseases, by means of which Rudra slew people are said to have been born in the land of the Mūjavats and the Mahāvṛṣas and sojourned among the Bāhlikas. It is not therefore improbable that the home of Rudra was situated in the midst of these peoples who seem to have dwelt in the environs of the Mount Mūjavat, the prototype of the later Kailāsa.

Two other features of Śiva which he acquired by his residence on the mountain may be considered here with advantage. Śiva is frequently referred to in the Purāṇas and later Sanskrit literature as Candrasekhara, Candramauli, Candracūḍa, etc., that is the god who bears the Moon on his head or tuft. Several unconvincing stories are narrated in the Purāṇas to explain how Śiva came to carry the Moon on his head; none of them gives a reasonable and satisfactory explanation. The association of the Moon with Śiva can best be explained with reference to soma which played an important part in the religious life of the Vedic Aryans. Soma was a plant which grew upon the mountains specially the Mūjavat (RV. 10.34<sup>1</sup>), from the juice of which the Aryans brewed a drink largely made use of in their sacrifices. Soma was also personified and elevated to the rank of a god; and his deification, according to Whitney, took place under the following circumstances:—

“This plant, which by its name should be akin to our common milk-weed, furnishes like the latter an abundant milky juice, which when fermented, possesses intoxicating qualities. In this circumstance it is believed, lies the explanation of the whole matter. The simple-minded Aryan people whose whole religion was a worship of the wonderful powers and phenomena of nature, had no sooner perceived that this liquid had power to elevate the spirits, and produce temporary frenzy, under the influence of which the individual was prompted to, and capable of, deeds beyond his natural powers, than they found in it something divine: it was to their apprehension a God, endowing these into whom it entered with God-like powers; the plant which afforded it became to them a king of plants.”<sup>43</sup>

43. JAOS, iii, p. 299.



Soma was further identified with the Moon, and was set in the midst of stars in the sky. This double character of soma, (1) as the liquor-yielding plant that grew on the heights of the Mūjavat and other mountains, and (2) as the God who presided over the plant and had his abode in the midst of the stars must be kept in view to gain a clear understanding of the nature of relationship between Śiva and the Moon. The Vedic Rudra, it may be remembered, resided in the Mūjavat; he was a wonderful physician who could, by means of his pure medicines, cure all diseases, and revive even the dead. He was, according to the Yajur Veda (Taitt. Saṁ. 4.5.10<sup>1</sup>—Vāj. Saṁ. 16.47), the lord of the soma plants (*andhasaspati*). Soma grew among other places on the Mūjavat (RV. 10.34<sup>1</sup>) and was the lord of the medicinal plants (*oṣadhīpati*). Therefore, when Rudra rose in importance and became Śiva, the supreme lord of the universe, the Moon, that is the deified soma, was naturally placed upon his head, and stories suitable to his new exalted position were invented to account for it.

*Śiva and the Ganges.*—The association of the Gaṅgā with Śiva appears to have been due to two causes. (1) Rudra, it may be recalled, was the lord of the mountains (*giritra*, Vāj. Saṁ. 16.3, Taitt. Saṁ. 4.5.1<sup>c</sup>); and he dwelt in flowing waters, billows, tranquil waters, water courses, lakes, rivers, ponds, etc. (Vāj. Saṁ. 16.31, 37-8). The birth of the rivers on the mountain slopes must have given rise to the legend of Gaṅgā springing from the head of Śiva. (2) Śiva's connection with Gaṅgā was partly due perhaps to Iranian influences. The double role which the Gaṅgā plays in the Indian mythology as a heavenly stream and its earthly counterpart recalls to the mind the Persian Anāhitā:

"Ārdvī Surā Anāhitā, that is undoubtedly, 'the high powerful immaculate one' is a goddess of fertilizing waters, and more particularly of a supernatural spring, located in the region of the stars, from which all the rivers of the world flow."<sup>44</sup> "Coming from one of the summits of the mountain Alborz, she is as large as all other waters taken together, which spring out of this heavenly source. When she discharges into the sea of Vourukaṣa, then all its shores are widened."<sup>45</sup> Anāhitā was grafted, according to Moul-

44. Darmesteter, ERE, i,v, Anāhitā, p. 414.

45. Haug: *The Religion of the Parsis*, pp. 197-8.



ton, 'upon an Iranian river-cult, specially connected with the Oxus.'<sup>46</sup>

From these passages it is quite clear that like Gaṅgā, Anāhitā was the personification of a heavenly river which had a counterpart on earth, probably the Oxus. Like the earthly Gaṅgā, the earthly Anāhitā had her origin in a mountain (Alburz=Harā berezaiti), and emptied its waters into the sea of Vourukaṣa. The close companionship which existed between Anāhitā and Mithra bears also striking resemblance to that of Gaṅgā and Śiva. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the legend of Gaṅgā's descent from the head of Śiva took shape owing to some forgotten cultural and religious contacts between India and Iran which were far more intimately connected with each other in ancient times than at the present day.

### (c) *Accoutrement.*

The characteristic weapon with which Śiva is said to be armed is the *triśūla* or trident, though his bow, the *pināka*, and the arrow, the *pāśupata*, are occasionally mentioned in the Purāṇas and other classical Sanskrit works. Of these the *triśūla* appears to have been adopted by Śiva when he cast Rudra into the shade and assumed the sovereignty over the universe. He, however, inherited his bow and arrow from Rudra. The Vedas give a full account of his martial equipment. He is invariably represented as an archer with drawn bow ready to discharge his strong, swift, sharp-pointed arrows with which he shot down men and other animals. (RV. 2.33<sup>10.11</sup>, 5.42<sup>11</sup>, 10.125<sup>6</sup>, 7.46<sup>1.4</sup>; Taitt. Saṁ. 4.5.3<sup>bc</sup>, 4.5.10<sup>b</sup>). His bow, his hero-slaying, man-slaying, cattle-slaying arrows (RV. 2.33<sup>1</sup>; 4.3<sup>6</sup>), his hundred quivers (Taitt. Saṁ. 4.5<sup>3</sup>), his spear (ibid. 4.5.10<sup>k</sup>), his thunderbolt (RV. 2.33<sup>3</sup>) and his club (*pināka* A.V. 1.28<sup>5</sup>, SB. 9.1.1<sup>6</sup>) are all frequently mentioned in the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas. His bow was notched for adjusting the string; he put on armour, corselet, and cuirass (Taitt. Saṁ. 4.5.6), and went forth to battle riding in a chariot (R.V. 6.20<sup>9</sup>, 2.33<sup>11</sup>).

The picture of Rudra with a drawn bow ready to discharge his deadly missiles, brings before the mind another great god who played an important part in shaping the destinies of one of the foremost nations of antiquity with whom the Vedic Aryans came into vital contact. Assur, the national god of the Assyria, was similarly

46. *Early Zoroastrianism*, p. 239.



represented in the ancient monuments as an archer ready to shoot his trident arrows like the Vedic Rudra. This resemblance between the two Gods is not fortuitous; for, a number of other features common to both of them seems to indicate the existence of some hidden fundamental connection between them, which has so far remained undetected. The common ground where Assur and Rudra meet and disclose their essential affinity must be sought for in the orb of the sun; for, Assur and Rudra were both solar deities. The former, according to Jastrow, 'was originally a solar deity.'<sup>47</sup> The symbols by means of which he was represented distinctly indicate his solar origin.

Jastrow is of opinion that the winged disc was 'the purer and more genuine symbol of Assur as a solar deity,' and designates it 'as a sun disc with protruding rays.' He declares further that 'to this symbol, the warrior with the bow and arrow was added—a despiritualisation that reflects the martial spirit of the Assyrian empire.'<sup>48</sup> The warrior enclosed within the circle, it must be pointed out, was not a later importation, but an integral part of the original motif. He was not an anthropomorphous deity, but a bird with human head and arms, rising perpendicularly into the sky, like the veritable 'falcon of heaven' alluded to in the Vedas. The warrior enclosed within the winged circle or wheel was none other than the Sun-God himself with his shining orb spreading the rays all over the world.

A few other facts pertaining to Assur, besides the symbols enumerated above, may be noticed here with advantage. He was described as a bull, 'the ruling animal of the heavens.'<sup>49</sup> It is not unlikely that some of the winged human headed bulls so characteristic of the Assyrian monuments were meant to represent the national god in his bovine form. Assur was also associated with a tree: 'At the New year Festival in Assyria,' says Sydney Smith, 'use was made of a bare tree-trunk, round which metal bands, called "yokes" were fastened, and fillets were attached.' 'In Assyria the sacred tree, ornamented as described above, was associated with the god Ashur, whose symbol the winged disc of the Sun in which the god himself sits, is constantly shown over the tree.'<sup>50</sup> Another point of interest which must be noted in this connection

47. *Babylonian and Assyrian Religion*, p. 193.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 335.

49. Donald A. Mackenzie: *Myths of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 334.

50. *Early History of Assyria*, pp. 123, 124.



is Assur's relationship with the goddess Ishtar, the most famous of the mother goddesses of the ancient world. Although he was not generally associated with any female deity, there is good reason for believing that he was the husband of Ishtar, the daughter of 'Sin' or the Moon.

"At times Belit appears as the wife of Bel, again as the consort of Ashur, again as the consort of Ea, and again simply as a designation of Ishtar. To account for this we must bear in mind, as has already been pointed out, that just as Bel in the sense of 'lord' came to be applied merely as a title of the chief god of Babylonia, so Belit as 'lady' was used in Assyria to designate the chief goddess.....Ashurbanapal regards Belit as the wife of Ashur.....At the same time he gives to this Belit the title of 'mother of great gods'.....Ashurbanapal, however, goes still further, and influenced by the title of Belit, as applied to Ishtar, makes the latter the consort of Ashur. This at least is the case in an inscription from the temple of Belit at Nineveh, known as Emash-mash and in which Ashurbanapal alternately addresses the goddess as Belit and Ishtar, while elsewhere, the same Belit whose seat is in Emash-mash is termed the consort of Ashur."<sup>51</sup>

The solar characteristics of Rudra are frequently referred to in the Vedas. He was the great *asura* and the ruddy boar of the sky (*asuro maho divas* RV. 2.1<sup>6</sup>, *divo varāham aruṣam* 1.114<sup>5</sup>); he was a luminous and fiery deity (2.33<sup>8</sup>), who was brilliant as the Sun (Sūrya) and shone like gold (1.43.<sup>5</sup>); the complexion of his body was ruddy (Taitt. Sam. 4.5.1<sup>h</sup>) or copper-coloured (Vāj. Sam. 16.7); he had golden arms, and thousand eyes (16.17.14). Rudra was the father and the lord of this vast world (R.V. 6.49<sup>10</sup>, 2.33<sup>9</sup>), an ordainer (6. 46<sup>1</sup>), and by his rule and universal dominion, he was aware of the doings of men and gods (7.46<sup>2</sup>), and he offered his protection from the sky (8.20<sup>17</sup>). The characteristics of Rudra described in these texts proclaim his solar affinities, and are explained by a passage in the Atharva Veda where the Sun is actually identified with Rudra. 'He (Sūrya) (is) Rudra, winner of good, in the giving of good' (A.V. 13.4<sup>26</sup>).

Rudra was also connected, through his other self, Agni, with a celestial bird. The latter, according to the R̥g Veda was 'a divine bird,' 'the eagle of the sky' (1.164<sup>52</sup>, 7.14<sup>4</sup>); and he soared into

51. Jastrow: *Babylonian and Assyrian Religion*, pp. 226-7.



heaven conveying the dead in his back to Viṣṇu's world in the orb of the Sun (Vāj. Saṁ. 18.51). Rudra was also associated with rain and vegetation; his sons, the Maruts, produced fertilizing waters :—

“These followers of Rudra, having been produced from the sky, exalted, fertilizing, divine purifiers, bright as suns, like heroes; shedding drops, fearful in form.....

“We praise with invocations, the fierce, purifying, rain-dispensing, energetic, offspring of Rudra. To obtain prosperity, worship the host of Maruts, which sweeps over the atmosphere, vigorous, impetuous and fertilizing” (R. V. 1.64<sup>2, 12</sup>).

Rudra was a healer, a skilful physician who had in his possession effective remedies (R.V. 1.43<sup>4</sup>) with which he healed the ‘cattle, and men and kine, and children’ (ibid. 43<sup>2</sup>) ; and ‘granted prosperity and welfare to our horses, rams, ewes, men, women, and cows’ (43<sup>6</sup>).

Rudra was the lord of the fields (Vāj. Saṁ. 16.18); he existed in the soil and in the threshing floor (16.33) ; he was also the lord of the forests (16.18), bushes, trees, and plants (16-19). There is reason to believe that he was specially associated with a tree though it is not possible to discover its identity. The attribute green-haired (*harikeśāya*. Vāj. Saṁ. 16.17) ascribed to him and the trees in common indicates that he had some particular connection with the trees. This view is further confirmed by a request addressed to him that while approaching his devotees he should place his weapon on the highest tree (16.51). Moreover, the cakes offered to him and Ambikā in the *Tryambaka homa* were tied in one or more baskets and fastened to a tree<sup>51a</sup>. It is therefore clear that a tree, a precursor of *bilva* (*Elaeocarpus Canitrus*) or *rudrākṣa* (*aegle mermelos*) was sacred to Rudra.

Another fact which has to be mentioned in this connection is Rudra's relationship with Ambikā. She first makes her appearance in the Yajur Veda Saṁhitās where she figures as a sister of Rudra (Vāj Saṁ. 3.60); but in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* where the word *Tryambaka* is interpreted as ‘Rudra associated with the woman (*strī*), Ambikā,’ unmarried girls were required to go round the

51a. Keith: *Black Yajur Veda* I, p. 118.



sacrificial fire (? Rudra) invoking the aid of Tryambaka for husbands:

“We worship Tryambaka, the fragrant bestower of the husbands.....Husbands doubtless are the support of women.”

S.B. 2.6.2.14.

The unmarried girls, in other words, were enjoined to invoke Rudra conjointly with Ambikā to grant them husbands. The interpretation of Tryambaka as Stryambaka in the Brāhmaṇa, and the invocation addressed to the pair, Rudra and Ambikā, by unmarried girls for husbands strongly suggest that Rudra and Ambikā were related to each other not only as brother and sister but also as husband and wife.

The points of similarity between Assur and Rudra may now be summed up. Assur and Rudra were both solar deities; each of them was armed with a bow and arrows; and was associated with an eagle, a bull and a sacred tree. Moreover, both had a female companion who was at once a wife as well as a mother or a sister. There is, however, one point of difference which must not be left unnoticed. Assur, it may be remembered, was enclosed in a circle representing the solar disc. Notwithstanding the solar affinities of Rudra, no circle or disc is mentioned in the Vedas in connection with him. The idea of the solar circle enclosing the person of the deity is not, however, unknown to the Aryans. The *Chāndogya Upanisad*, for instance, describes briefly the deity within the Sun's disc (Chand. Up. 1.6.6.f).

“Now, that golden person who is seen within the sun has a golden beard, and golden hair. He is exceedingly brilliant, all, even to the finger nail tips.

“His eyes are even as a *kapyāsa*, ‘lotus flower’. His name is High (*ud*).”<sup>52</sup>

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, in which the golden person is identified with Brahman, adds some more particulars.

“The form of this person is like a saffron-coloured robe, like white wool, like the (red) *indragopa*-beetle, like a flame of fire, like the (white) lotus-flower, like the sudden flash of a lightning.”<sup>53</sup>

52. Hume : *Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 183.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 97.



This person is still meditated upon by every Brahman thrice a day. How old this concept of the golden person within the Sun is, is not known. It is doubtful whether it was familiar to the Vedic Aryans. No explicit reference to it is found in the pre-Upaniṣadic literature. However, there is in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, a legend which may perhaps be taken as a dim anticipation of Upaniṣadic concept:

The gods Agni, Indra, Soma, Makha, and others who were present at a sacrifice at Kurukṣetra entered into an agreement that he who first comprehended the issue of the sacrifice should be most eminent of them. Viṣṇu, who first attained the issue of the sacrifice, became the most eminent of the Gods. Filled with the sense of his own greatness, he departed from them with his bow and three arrows, and stood with his head resting upon the end of the bended bow. The Gods who could not overcome him sat round him, and incited the ants to gnaw the bow-string. When the ants cut the string, it snapped and the bended bow starting sunder cut off the head of Viṣṇu which fell down with the noise 'ghṛṇ' and became that Āditya (the Sun)<sup>54</sup>.

The head of Viṣṇu which thus became Āditya was later on converted into his disc, a formidable weapon with which he slew the Asuras. According to a legend incorporated in the *Mahābhārata*, Viṣṇu obtained the disc from Śiva, who was pleased with him for killing a Daitya living in the waters.<sup>55</sup>

It is hard to determine how ancient the legend is. The Tamil Śaiva saint Appar who flourished about the first half of the 7th century A.D. alludes to it in one of the hymns of his *Tēvāram*.<sup>56</sup> This legend, if it were really ancient, and not a mere sectarian invention of later times, would show that Śiva had also some connection with the solar disc, a fact which is borne out by a verse of unknown origin occurring in the daily *sandhyāvandana* of the Brahmins :

Salutation to Savitr, the sole eye and the cause of the birth, being and dissolution of the universe, the embodiment of the

54. Muir : *Original Sanskrit Texts*, IV, p. 125.

55. *Mahābhārata*, XIII, 14, 668. See Sorensen's *Mahābhārata Index* v. *Sudarṣana*, p. 653.

56. Appar :

*Taḍamalar-āyiraṅgal*, 4, 14, 10.

*Erudan-ēladattān*, 4, 49, 5.



Trayī, the bearer of the three *guṇas* and the (united) self of Viriñci, Nārāyaṇa and Śaṅkara.<sup>57</sup>

Assur and Rudra possessed, therefore, several features in common. Whether these similarities were accidental or due to some long forgotten contact between the two Gods can hardly be determined at present.

#### (d) Bull Vehicle.

The favourite mount on which Śiva is usually represented as riding is a *vṛṣabha* or bull from which he acquired the name of *Vṛṣabhavāhana* or 'he whose mount is a bull'. The Vedic Rudra, however, was not a bull-rider. He rode, according to the Ṛg Veda in a war-chariot like all the other Vedic Gods (2.33<sup>4</sup>). Although the Vedic Rudra did not ride on a bull like his later counterpart, he was himself represented as a bull. Rudra, it may be remembered, was the father of the Maruts, through his wife Pṛṣni. Now Pṛṣni was a cow (RV. 5.52<sup>16</sup>), and her sons were known as '*Pṛṣnimātaraḥ*' and '*Gomātaraḥ*', that is 'having Pṛṣni or cow for their mother' (1.23<sup>10</sup>, 1.85<sup>3</sup>). They were also spoken of as bulls. It is not unlikely that Rudra, the husband of the cow and the father of bulls, was himself a bull. He was, as a matter of fact, addressed, in one of the hymns of the Ṛg Veda as a bull:

'Let us not annoy thee, O Rudra, by our salutations, by our unsuitable laudations, O *Vṛṣabha*, or by our joint invocations.'

'*Vṛṣabha*, followed by the Maruts pleased me, his suppliant with robust health'.<sup>58</sup>

The name *Paśupati* which is frequently met with in the later *Saṁhitās* appears to have primarily signified the mate of a cow. It has already been noted that a cow or *gomṛga* was the special victim offered to Rudra. These associations of Rudra with the bovine family clearly indicate that originally he was also regarded as a bull-god. When, however, anthropomorphic representations of the divine beings became common, the original bull form was driven into the background, and the bull was henceforward regarded as a symbol (cf. *vṛṣabhalāñchana*, *vṛṣabhaketana*) or vehicle (cf. *vṛṣabhavāhana*) of Rudra, and stories were fabricated to account for the choice of the bull as his vehicle.

57. *Namassavitre jagad-eka-cakṣuṣe jagat-prasūti-sthiti-nāśa-hetave Trayī-mayāya triguṇ-ātma-dhāṛiṇe Viriñci-Nārāyaṇa-Śaṅkarātmane.*

58. RV. 2.33<sup>4</sup>. *Mā tvā Rudra cukrudhāma namobhir mā duṣṭviti vṛṣabha mā sahūti.*

*Ud mā mamanda vṛṣabho marutvān tvakṣiyasā vayasā nādhāmānam.*



## CHAPTER 4

### *Names and representations.*

Most of the important names applied to Śiva in later literature are found in the later Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas. Besides Rudra, and Tryambaka which occur in the Ṛg Veda, Agni, Aśani, Paśupati, Bhava, Śarva, Īśāna, Mahādeva, Ugradeva; (Vāj. Saṁ. 39.8) ; Citta, Auṣiṣṭhahan (Taitt. Saṁ. 1.4.36), Bhīma (4.5.8.1), Nīlakaṇṭha, Śitikaṇṭha, Kapardin, Muṇḍin, Sahasrākṣa, Śata-dhanvan (ibid 4.5.5) and Kumāra (S.B. 6.1.3.<sup>10</sup>) are mentioned as the names of the god. Some of these names such as Aśani, Ugra, Bhīma, Paśupati, Nīlakaṇṭha, Śitikaṇṭha, Kapardin, Kumāra had their origin in Rudra's association with Agni; others like Īśāna, Mahādeva were assumed by him as mark of his sovereignty over the universe and his superiority over the other Gods; and a few arose out of Rudra's coalescence with local deities of similar character like Bhava and Śarva.

A few remarks of an explanatory character may not be out of place in this connection regarding some of these names, as they are expected to throw some light on the manner of the transformation of Vedic Rudra into Puranic Śiva.

Bhava and Śarva appear to have been originally independent Gods, who became fused early with Rudra, owing probably to the similarity of their characteristics. Their relationship with Rudra seems to have remained indeterminate for some time. Although Bhava and Śarva occur as synonyms of Rudra in the Yajur Veda Saṁhitās, they appear in the Atharva Veda as the names of divinities who are "distinct from one another and from Rudra."<sup>59</sup> They are spoken of, in the *Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra*, as the sons of Rudra and are compared with wolves eager for prey (4.20<sup>1</sup>).<sup>60</sup> The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* which identifies them with Agni discloses the region where they were originally worshipped. "Agni is a god: these are his names, Śarva as the eastern people call him, Bhava as the Bāhikas, Paśupati, Rudra, Agni" (1.7.3<sup>8</sup>).<sup>61</sup>

59. Macdonell: *Vedic Mythology*, p. 75.

60. Ibid.

61. Eggeling SBE, xii, pp. 201-2. *Agnir vai sa devastasyaitāni nāmāni Śarvaḥ iti yathā Prācyah ācakṣate Bhavaḥ iti yathā Bāhikāḥ Paśu-nāṁgatiḥ Rudraḥ dvaitaḥ*. Collection. Digitized by eGangotri. SE (Weber), p. 70.



The Atharva Veda couples them together frequently, and invokes their joint blessings on their devotees. The reason for the combination of these two forms of proto Rudra is not quite obvious. Affinities of the cult and the similarity of character of the two deities might have partly brought them together. Whatever might have been the actual cause of their union, they had one thing in common; both the gods originally belonged to countries which stood outside the pale of the Vedic Aryan territory. Bāhika, where, according to the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Rudra was known by the name of Bhava, was situated, as pointed out already, somewhere in the north outside the Aryan world beyond the Mūjavats, and Prācyā where Rudra was called Śarva must have stood in the neighbourhood; for, Śarva was known to the Iranians; and he appears to have been a popular god among them before the advent of Zoroaster, who transformed him with Indra and the Nāsatyas, into a councillor of the arch-demon (*daevānām daeva*), Angromainyush.<sup>62</sup> He occupied the third seat in the council, and joined the other councillors in advising his chief to summon an assembly of the *daevas* 'on the summit of Arezūra', for concerting measures to put Zarathushtra to death 'at the dwelling of Pourushaspa.'<sup>63</sup> Judging from the place and importance of Śarva in the councils of Angromainyush he appears to have had a large following in Iran. Since Śarva was unknown in India subsequent to the Vedic period except as a shadowy duplicate of Śiva, he seems to have originally been an Iranian god known to and worshipped, of course, by the Vedic Aryans; and owing to circumstances not traceable at present, he appears to have lost, in course of time, his importance and individuality, and merged ultimately into Rudra, the most accommodating deity in the Vedic pantheon.

If, then, Śarva were an Iranian deity converted by the reforming zeal of Zoroaster into a powerful demon, who could have been the Prācyas that rendered him homage and offered worship? To this question, however, no definite answer is possible, though it may be suggested that they were perhaps identical with the Persians; for, Pārsā, the original name of their country, which occurs in the cuneiform inscriptions of the early Achaemenian emperors is taken by some writers to mean east or eastern country.<sup>64</sup> It is

62. Vendidad, Fragar, xix, 43 (Haug: *Religion of the Parsis*, p. 337).

63. *Ibid.*

64. Waddel: *Makers of Civilization*, p. 216. The author does not clearly state that Barahsi or Parahsi, whom he equates with the Persians, means Easterners. He however seems to suggest this meaning in the following pass-



not possible to say definitely whether the old Iranian word Pārsā is an equivalent of the Sanskrit Prācyā, though an etymological connection between the two words is not altogether impossible. The changes which 'Prācyā' has undergone later at the hands of the classical writers may give some indication of the probable transformation of the word in the old Iranian language, the twin sister of the Vedic Sanskrit. "The Prāchyas (i.e. Easterns)", says Schwanbeck, "are called by Strabo, Arrian and Pliny Παρῳοι, Prasii; by Plutarch (Alex. 62) Παρῳοι; a name often used by Aelian also; by Nikolaus Damas (ap. Strob. Floril. 37, 38) Παρῳοι; by Diodorus (xvii, 93) Παρῳοι; by Curtis (ix, 2.3) Pharrasii."<sup>65</sup> The last mentioned transliteration nearly corresponds to Pārsā; and it is not improbable that the latter might have been an Iranian derivative of the Sanskrit Prācyā, if not actually a corruption of it.

The Atharva Veda furnishes some interesting information about the nature and the activities of these Gods. Bhava who was king (A.V. 6.93<sup>2</sup>) ruled the sky and the earth and filled the atmosphere (11.2<sup>27</sup>); Śarva who was an archer was identical with Yama (6.93<sup>1</sup>). Both of them were skilful shooters among all archers (6.28<sup>2</sup>); they were so fierce and terrible that none among men or gods could escape their destroying stroke (6.28<sup>5</sup>). Their destructive activities, and their fondness for slaying living beings are greatly emphasized in the Atharva Veda where they appear as twin gods of death, and proper companions of Yama, the king of the dead. It was perhaps their love of destruction that brought them near Rudra and ultimately led to their identification with him.

*Paśupati*.—Although the name Paśupati was generally applied to Rudra in the later Saṃhitās and the Brāhmaṇas, it was by no means peculiar to him. Occasionally Agni, was also addressed as Paśupati by the priests performing the

age: "But as has been remarked, Barahsi or Parahsi is usually mentioned in the Sargonic and other inscriptions along with Elam, which lies to the east of Mesopotamia;.....and Sargon's son Uru-Mash states in an inscription that 'he tore out the foundations of Barahsi from other nations of Elam'." This shows their inter-relationship and location to the east of Mesopotamia. .

A more explicit statement comes from the pen of the late Mr. V. Venkatachala Iyer who declares: "It should be easy to perceive that the vocable 'Prācyā' (eastern country) is the correct original form of the name Persia" (Bhāratavarsha, *Mysore University Magazine*, Dec. 1925).

65. McCrindle: *Ancient India*, p. 57.



sacrifice (Taitt. Saṁ. 3.1.4). This was probably due to the identification of the two Gods which resulted in the fusion of their titles and attributes. The animals over which Rudra bore sway included also men. He was the lord of the *dvipāds* as well as *catuṣpāds* (A.V. 4.28<sup>1</sup>); the five distinct sorts of animals, kine, horses, men, goats and sheep belonged to him (11.2<sup>9</sup>); and the beasts of the wood, deer, swan and all kinds of winged birds as well as the creatures living in waters (11.2<sup>24</sup>) such as tortoises, great serpents, *purikayas*, fishes, sea-monsters and *rajasus* were subjected to his authority. They were placed in their respective environments so that he might shoot them (11.2<sup>25</sup>).<sup>66</sup> Paśupati was therefore a destroyer of animals. His lordship over cattle seems to have denoted his capacity to kill and destroy living beings. Nevertheless, he was kind and liberal to those that appeased his wrath; spared their lives and bestowed on them health and prosperity. It was this aspect of Paśupati's character that attracted his devotees and served as a background for the later Pāśupata philosophy which appears to have been fairly well developed as early as the age of the Upaniṣads. The essential factors of the Pāśupata doctrine, *paśu*, *pati*, and *pāśa* are all latent in Paśupati,<sup>67</sup> and when the benevolent aspect of the god's character won popular recognition, their significance was brought out, and they were woven into the web of a new philosophy which transformed the god of destruction into a loving saviour of mankind.

*Liṅga*.—The *liṅga*, the universal emblem of Śiva, worshipped at present all over India, is comparatively recent in its origin. It is not mentioned in connection with Rudra or any other deity in the Vedas; but the assertion in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (4.11, 5.2) that Īśāna presided over every *yoni* and all forms of *yonis*, clearly indicates the affiliation of the phallus to Śiva; and by the time of the composition of the later books of the Mahābhārata, the worship of the phallic emblem appears to have become fairly popular.<sup>68</sup>

66. Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, IV, p. 337.

67. *Pāśa*, no doubt, is not mentioned anywhere in connection with Paśupati or Rudra; but it is involved in the idea of *paśu* which is derived from the root *paś* to bind.

68. Bhandarkar believes that *liṅga* worship was not known to Patañjali or Wema-Kadphises:—

"The *liṅga* worship had, it appears, not come into use at the time of Patañjali; for the instance he gives under P. V., 3, 99 is that of an image or likeness (*prakṛti*) of Śiva as an object of worship and not of any emblem of that god. It seems to have been unknown even in the time of Wema-



The worship of the *liṅga* or phallus is generally believed to have been non-Aryan, particularly Dravidian in its origin, and it is said to have crept into Aryan religion owing to the gradual fusion of the Aryan and the Dravidian peoples, and attached itself to Śiva, though no explanation is offered why it found Śiva more congenial to its character than any other deity in the Vedic pantheon. Evidence is drawn from two sources to prove the Dravidian origin of the *liṅga*. It is pointed out, in the first place, that the *Śiśnadevas* mentioned in the Ṛg Veda (RV. 7.21<sup>5</sup>, 10.99<sup>3</sup>) were the non-Aryan (Dravidian) devotees of the phallic deities:—

“There are two places in the Ṛg Veda”, says Bhandarkar, “in one of which Indra is prayed not to allow those whose god is *Śiśna* to disturb the rites of the singer (vii, 21,5); and in another he is represented to have conquered the riches of a city after killing those whose god is *Śiśna*. Here evidently those whose god was *Śiśna* or phallus, are meant as the enemies of the Vedic Aryas, who disturbed their holy rites. Notwithstanding all that is said about the matter, my own belief is that the persons here referred to were really some tribe of the aborigines of the country who worshipped the phallus. Just then as Rudra-Śiva cult borrowed several elements from the dwellers in forests and stragglers in places out of the way, so it may have borrowed this element of phallic worship from the barbarian tribes with whom the Aryas came into contact”.<sup>69</sup>

Keith is of opinion that the ‘noseless’ Dāsas whom he identifies with the Dravidians offered worship to the phallus, and suggests by implication that the phallus of Śiva entered the Aryan faith from that quarter.<sup>70</sup> The evidence in support of these views is surprisingly little. The terms *Drāviḍa*, *Drāmiḷa* denoting a distinct race of people are, as pointed out at the beginning of this lecture, myths of recent origin; and it is absurd to contend that they were identical with the Dāsas of the Vedic Age. An important

Kadphises, for in the reverse of his coins, there is a human figure of Śiva with a trident in the hand; and there is also an emblem, but it is Nandin, or the bull, and not a *liṅga* or phallus.”—*Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism*, p. 115.

The evidence of Bhandarkar is not quite conclusive; and it is extremely doubtful whether the worship of Śiva-*liṅga* was not known as late as the time of Patañjali and Wema-Kadphises. In this connection attention may be drawn to the archaic *liṅga* in the Paraśurāmēśvara temple at Guḍimallam in the North Arcot District of about the 2nd century B.C.

69. *Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism*, p. 115.

70. *Cambridge History of India*, p. 35.



anatomical peculiarity of the Dāsas mentioned in the Vedas gives the lie direct to the identification. The Dāsas are said to have been ‘*anāsah*’ or ‘noseless’ in the Vedas ; and it is hard to reconcile this fact with the shape of the nose of the so-called Dravidians who are said to constitute the bulk of the South Indian population, notwithstanding Keith’s assurance that the noseless Dāsas ‘were of the Dravidian type, as we know it at the present day.’<sup>71</sup> Secondly, it is by no means certain that the Aryans came into conflict with the Dāsas in India, for, they figure as Dāhas (Dāsas), the enemies of the ancient Persians, in the early Iranian records.<sup>72</sup> The common name and the hostility of Dāsa-Dāhas to the Indo-Iranians, as well as the common level of civilisation which the former seem to have attained, clearly suggest their identity, and point out that they must have come into conflict with the Indo-Iranians before separation, somewhere in Central Asia. The Dāhas originally lived in the steppes of the Jaxartes in the north of Iran; they moved from their original habitat and occupied the country to the north of Hyrcania on the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea. They were primarily horse-archers, but did not lack capacity to fight on foot.<sup>73</sup> Some time before the Śāka invasion during the latter half of the 2nd century B.C., they seem to have migrated to Bactria. The native people of Bactria were known to the Chinese as Ta-hia or Dāhae, and “are represented as an unwarlike people living in towns and villages which were governed by their own magistrates.”<sup>74</sup> They lived in “walled towns and regular houses” and “were shrewd traders.” The statement that they were poor fighters might be taken as a compliment to their Yueh-chi rulers. It is not however impossible that the martial elements in the population were destroyed by the Persians and Greeks under whom they lived.<sup>75</sup> Therefore it is not unlikely that the ‘noseless’ Dāsas with whom the Aryans came into conflict were the Dāhas of the Caspian steppes who, judging from their original habitat on the banks of Jaxartes, must have been a tribe of Mongolian extraction. The identity of

71. *Cambridge History of India*, I, p. 85.

72. Keith, who makes a systematic attempt to explain away the Vedic references to Iranian places, rivers, and tribes, dismisses the identification of Dāha and Dāsa impatiently. “But the hypothesis rests on too weak a foundation to be accepted as even plausible” (*Camb. Hist. of India*, p. 87). This is no argument ; and he offers none else.

73. Tarn : *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, p. 80.

74. *Cambridge History of India*, I, p. 566.

75. Tarn : *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, pp. 298-9.



the Dāsas with the Dravidians is thus seen to rest upon slender foundations, and the Dravidian origin of Śiva's phallus falls with it to the ground.

Secondly, opinion is divergent as to the exact significance of the term *śiśnadeva*. Indian commentators beginning with Yāska believe that it refers to people who led unchaste and lascivious lives.<sup>76</sup> But modern scholars decline to accept this interpretation, and urge against it two important objections. In the first place, it is pointed out that the Indian commentators, particularly Sāyaṇa, are not consistent in explaining the meaning of the suffix *-deva*. Though he understands it to mean in terms like *śiśnadevāḥ*, and *mūradevāḥ* in its generic sense 'to sport,' 'to enjoy,' he places on it its usual meaning of 'god' in similar compound words such as *anṛtadevāḥ*. Moreover, it is obvious that *śiśnadevāḥ* was used by the Vedic singers as a term of condemnation; and if it is taken to mean, 'lascivious,' as Sāyaṇa and the other ancient Indian commentators have done, 'it would not necessarily be a term of reproach in the mouth of an Indian poet of the Vedic age, when though the institution of the marriage was recognized and honoured, no great amount of reprobation could have attached to unchastity in the case of men'. Secondly, it is quite in agreement with the tenor of the R̥g Veda to take the word '*śiśnadeva*' to refer to people following a different creed as '*akarmaṇ*', '*adevayū*', '*anṛc*', '*anindra*', '*anya-vrata*', '*apavrata*', '*avrata*', '*abrahmaṇ*' '*ayaśvan*', '*ayaśyū*,' etc., and speak contemptuously of their gods as *śiśna-devāḥ*, or gods who are *śiśna*s or *śiśna*-like in form.<sup>77</sup>

It is, however, doubtful whether '*śiśna*' in the passages mentioned above denotes *liṅga* or the phallus; for the latter refers to an image or emblem symbolising the central idea of a cult; whereas *śiśna* signifies only 'the male organ.' Moreover, *śiśna* is also used in certain hymns of the R̥g Veda in the sense of 'tail'; there-

76. Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, IV, p. 409. Yāska comments on the word thus: "*Śiśna-devāḥ abrahmacaryāḥ*." Sāyaṇa explains it further. "*Śiśna-devāḥ | śiśnena divyanti kṛdanti iti śiśna-devāḥ | abrahmacaryāḥ ity arthaḥ*" *tathā ca Yāskah . . . .* "*śiśna-devāḥ abrahmacaryāḥ*." And Durga interprets it similarly:

*Śiśnena nityam eva prakīrṇābhīḥ strībhīḥ sākam kṛdantaḥ āste śrautāni karmāṇy utsrjya.*

77. Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, IV, pp. 410-11.



fore it may also be taken as suggested by Roth, to mean 'tailed (or priapic) demons' and not worshippers of *śiśna*.<sup>78</sup>

Nevertheless, the tendency to see phallic worship in the *śiśnadevas* still persists, and it has gained ground by the conclusions of archaeologists who claim to have unearthed the Dravidian civilisation long before the advent of the Aryans.<sup>79</sup> The recent excavations at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa are generally believed to have revealed the prevalence of phallic worship among the Dravidian inhabitants of the Indus Valley during what is called the Chalcolithic age. If this were true, it would establish the existence of the Dravidian race as well as the pre-Aryan phallic worship on unassailable foundations. This, however, is not the case. Disregarding for the moment the theories about the racial affinities of the people of the Indus Valley, one gets very little help from the finds brought to light by the spade of the archaeologists, to determine the race to which they belonged. Briefly, the position is this: in the Indus Valley, the archaeologists unearthed two ancient cities and brought to light the remains of several well constructed brick buildings, a large number of inscribed seals engraved with the images of trees, animals, and animal-headed deities, a few statues in stone and metal, implements, jars, etc. The key to the Indus Valley script is still undiscovered, and notwithstanding the heroic attempts of scholars to lay bare its secrets, it remains as unintelligible to-day as it was when Cunningham first chanced upon a few stray specimens during the last quarter of the 19th century. So long as the script remains undeciphered, no definite conclusions can be arrived at about the linguistic and racial affinities of the people. The theories that are advanced on the basis of the indirect deductions from the symbols on the seals and other objects are only tentative in character and can lay no claim to finality. Keeping these observations in view, we may now proceed to examine whether the remains of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa give a definite indication about the racial affiliations of the Indus Valley people.

78. Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, IV, p. 411. *Mūṣo na śiśnā vyadanti mā ādhyāḥ*: (R. V. 1 105<sup>b</sup>) 'cares worry me, like mice gnawing their tails.'

79. Sir John Marshall whose lead is generally followed by most of the writers on the subject does not explicitly assert that the authors of the Indus Valley civilisation were Dravidians; but he attributes this civilisation to Pre-Aryans or Non-Aryans, and equates them with the Dravidians (See *Mohenjo-Daro*, Vol. I, pp. 48-9). This attitude of Marshall has engendered a crop of wild theories which fill the pages of several contemporary journals.



The most important finds that have a direct bearing upon the subject under consideration are, no doubt, the human skeletal remains. They offer unfortunately little or no help to establish the racial affiliations of the people of the Indus Valley. Twenty-four skeletons were discovered in the levels belonging to the Chalcolithic age; and they had been assigned by competent ethnologists to "four distinct ethnic types, viz., the Proto-Australoid, the Mediterranean, the Mongolian branch of the Alpine stock, and the Alpine." It is obvious that the population of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa was heterogeneous in character, and it is not possible to arrive at any definite conclusion from these meagre data about the race to which the people in the Indus Valley as a whole belonged. Several statues and sculptures were, no doubt, discovered; but, as Marshall points out, 'the artists were no anthropologists, and are hardly likely to have paid much attention to the shapes of the heads, to have given us very truthful transcripts of the originals'.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, the evidence furnished by the skeletal and sculptural remains is quite inconclusive, and leaves the problem utterly unsolved.

There remain, however, a large number of terracottas, inscribed seals and slabs, besides a few copper coins, which throw some light on the religion of the people, to be taken into consideration. These furnish the only material for the study of religion and indirectly of the race of the Indus Valley people; and naturally they constitute the basis of every theory that seeks to trace their origin. Sir John Marshall who directed the excavations, and had consequently first-hand knowledge of the Indus Valley finds, subjected them to a searching examination and reached certain definite conclusions about the race of these most ancient people. They were, in his opinion, pre-Aryan and their culture differed from that of the Aryans very widely. Leaving out of consideration, some points of minor importance, the principal grounds on which Marshall bases his conclusions may be stated here briefly.<sup>81</sup>

80. *Mohenjo-Daro*, I, pp. 107-8.

81. To prove his thesis Sir John Marshall puts forward certain views which are not borne out by facts. He states that the tiger and elephant which were familiar to the Indus Valley people were unknown to the Aryans. "Of the tiger," declares he, "there is no mention in the Vedas, and of the elephant but little, but both these animals are familiar to the Indus people." (*Mohenjo-Daro*, I, p. 111). This is not at all true; both these animals were as familiar to the Aryans as to the Indus people. The tiger, no doubt, is not mentioned in the *Rg Veda*; but in the later *Saṁhitās* and the *Brāhmaṇas*, it is referred



The Vedic Aryans were acquainted with most of the important metals; gold, copper, and bronze are mentioned in the R̥g Veda; besides these, silver and iron are also referred to in the later Saṁhitās; but in the cities of the Indus Valley silver was

to in several places. The following texts may be consulted with advantage in this connection: Taitt. Saṁ. 5.4.10.5; Kāṭhaka Saṁ. 17.2.; Maitrāyaṇi Saṁ, 2.1.9; Vāj. Saṁ. 14.9; AV. 4. 36-6, 8.5.11, 12.1.49; [the last mentioned-text is of special interest, as it alludes to the tiger as *puruṣād* or man-eater]. AB. 8.5.3, and SB. 12.7.1.8. The elephant which was called by the Aryans *mṛga-hasti*, is mentioned for instance in RV. 1.64.7, 4.16.14; *mṛga-vāraṇa* in 8.38.8, 10.40.8; and *ibha* in 1.84.17, 4.4.1, 9.57.3; Taitt. Saṁ. 1.2.11.1; and Vāj. Saṁ. 13.9. Marshall also lays undue stress upon unimportant details, and bases on them conclusions which they cannot support. He draws attention to the omission, in the dietary of the Aryans, of fish, and points out that they belonged to a racial group totally distinct from the Indus people who ate fish besides other aquatic animals. The difference is not material; for, the articles of food and drink are only casually mentioned in the Vedas mostly in connection with the sacrificial ritual. It is not reasonable to take the list drawn up from articles mentioned incidentally in the Vedic texts as a complete and exhaustive catalogue of materials of food and deduce therefrom a definite inference about what the Aryans actually consumed. The Vedas as a matter of fact mention *matsyas*, *jhaṣas* and other aquatic animals, as well as a tribe of people called the Matsyas (fishmen), who appear to have been somehow connected with the fish. Several terms such as *dhaivara*, *śauṣkala*, *dāśa*, *bainda*, *kaivarta*, *maināla*, etc., which according to Sāyana denote persons catching fish by means of various devices, are mentioned in the Vedas, though his interpretation of these terms does not commend itself to modern scholars (*Vedic Index*, II, p. 174). Granting for the sake of argument that the Aryans, unlike the Indus people, had a general aversion to fish, it cannot be used as an argument in support of Marshall's contention; for, instances of people belonging to the same racial group and culture who differ in their views as to the legality or otherwise of consuming certain articles of food can be cited without difficulty. The Brahmans and the Kṣatriyas who belong to the same race differ in their views about the legality of eating meat; the Gauḍa and Sārasvat Brahmans eat fish, while the Deccani and southern Brahmans eat neither fish nor flesh. Similarly, the Tamil Veḷḷālas who follow Śaivism are strict vegetarians, though a small section outside the Śaivite fold has no objection to consume non-vegetarian food. Therefore, the predominance of fish and other aquatic animals in the diet of the inhabitants of the Indus Valley must be attributed to their proximity to the sea and the river Indus rather than to any cultural or racial difference from the Aryans. Similarly, he attributes the absence of any trace of domestic hearth to the ignorance of the Indus people of Agni and his cult. The failure to discover fire pits cannot be taken as definite evidence of the pre-Aryan nationality of the Indus people; for no traces of fire-places, excepting three doubtful cases, were discovered anywhere in the Indus cities (*Mohenjo-Daro*, I, p. 16). It will be absurd to argue from this that the Indus people did not know the use of fire.



more common than gold; copper and bronze were also in use. The total absence of iron, and the discovery of a few utensils and vessels of stone in the excavated areas distinctly indicate the priority of the Indus culture. Moreover, the defensive armour, helmet, and coat of mail of the Aryans, and their absence in the cities of the Indus Valley, lead to the same conclusion. Besides, the horse which played such an important part in the lives of the Aryans was unknown in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. Again, the religious practices of the Aryans described in the Vedas differed fundamentally from the faith of the Indus Valley; for instance, the cow which was regarded with special veneration by the Aryans was of no particular account in the Indus Valley, where the cult of the bull which had taken its place was extremely popular. The Vedic religion was aniconic, but at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa idol worship was quite common. The female element in the Vedic pantheon was subordinate to the male; neither the Mother Goddess nor Śiva had a place among the Vedic Gods. In the Indus Valley the female element was coequal with, if not actually more dominant than, the male; and the Mother Goddess and Śiva were both prominent and popular; and the phallic worship, so abhorrent to the Aryan sentiment, found in the cities of the Indus Valley a numerous following. Lastly, Agni, the foremost of the Vedic deities, who was represented in every Aryan household by the domestic hearth was not known in the Indus Valley, and no vestiges of domestic fire were found in the houses excavated at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa.

"These considerations", in the opinion of Marshall, "put out of court any solution of the problem which postulates an earlier date for the Vedic than for the Indus Valley civilization."<sup>82</sup> If, on the other hand, the Indo-Aryans were themselves the authors of this civilization, he points out, they would not have lapsed from the city to the village state as evidenced by the Vedas; nor would they have abandoned "the excellent houses of bricks" for "the inferior structures of bamboo." Moreover, the absence, if not actually the exclusion of the Mother Goddess and Śiva, the predominant deities of the Indus Valley, from the Vedic pantheon, and the feeling of disgust with which the Aryans regarded the phallic worship are hardly compatible with the Aryan origin of the Indus Valley culture.<sup>83</sup> Nor could the Aryans have so com-

82. *Mohenjo-Daro*, I, p. 110-11.

83. It is not easy to follow Sir John Marshall's argument in this context. "Could the Aryans," he asks, "have been the authors of the Indus as well



pletely forgotten Sind and the Lower Indus as to make no mention of them in the Vedas, had they really occupied the country at that time. Owing to these considerations, Sir John Marshall has arrived at the conclusion that the Aryans could not have been the authors of the Indus Valley civilization.<sup>84</sup>

The conclusions of Sir John Marshall, it must be pointed out, are not quite warranted by facts. The theory of the pre-Aryan origin of the Indus civilisation, so elaborately developed by him, rests, as a matter of fact, on unstable foundations. The evidence which he has brought forward to prove his case points out, on the contrary, that the cities of the Indus Valley flourished actually in the post-Ṛg Vedic period. An important fact which Marshall has failed to notice must be noted here. The four Saṁhitās which constitute the Vedas, or the four Vedas, as the Saṁhitās are frequently alluded to, are not the products of the same age. Of these the Ṛg Veda Saṁhitā is the oldest, and the other Saṁhitās are generally believed to have come into existence later, though the exact duration of time which separated the Ṛg Veda from the later Saṁhitās cannot be fixed with precision. This fact has an important bearing on the relative chronology of the Vedic and the Indus civilizations; and no satisfactory conclusions can be reached without taking these into consideration. Now, one of the grounds on which Marshall bases his theory of the pre-Aryan origin of the Indus civilization is the presence of stone implements and vessels in the sites of the ruined Indus cities which he aptly describes as the survivals of the Neolithic age. These survivals taken together with the total absence of iron which was quite familiar to the Aryans, as attested by the evidence of the Vedas, are believed to

as of the Vedic civilization?" Assuming for the sake of argument that they were, he proceeds to show the untenable character of the assumption. He is of opinion that the Indus people who at first worshipped Śiva and the *linga* and the Mother Goddess could not have abandoned their worship in the Vedic age and returned to it subsequently. "We are wholly at a loss", says he, "to explain how, having once worshipped Śiva and the *linga*, and the Mother Goddess, they ceased to do so in the Vedic period, but returned to the worship later" (*Mohenjo-Daro*, I, pp. 111-112). This, however, is not as improbable as Marshall seems to believe. The history of the Jews offers several instances of the abandonment and the readoption of idolatry. The Christian Church which started with the denunciation of idol worship accepted it after the conversion of the pagans. Conversions from Hinduism of individuals and families to Islam and Christianity and their reconversion to the faith of their fore-fathers are still common. It is not inconceivable that the Aryans should have readopted a faith which they had once abandoned.



point unmistakably to an earlier date for the Indus cities. "How comes it," asks Marshall, "that the Indus culture betrays so many survivals of the Neolithic Age—in the shape of stone implements and vessels—if the copper or bronze and iron culture of the Indo-Aryans intervened between the two?"<sup>85</sup> Stone implements and vessels which are manifestly the survivals of a past age cannot be taken as the criterion for determining the respective ages of the Indus and the Vedic civilizations; for such survivals are not peculiar to the Indus cities but are commonly found in all ages including the present. Implements and vessels of stone such as the mortar, mill-stones, grinding-stones, stone vessels of different shapes are still in common use amongst us, and a brisk trade in stone-ware is carried on in several places like Salem, Saidāpuram (Nellore District) etc. It is not therefore possible to fix the age of an ancient site with the help solely of stone implements and vessels. The absence of iron, on the contrary, constitutes a genuine mark of antiquity; but iron was as unknown to the Aryans of the Ṛg Veda as to the people of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. The knowledge of metals of the Aryans during the age of Ṛg Veda was confined to gold, silver, copper or bronze; and iron (*śyāma-* or *kṛṣṇāyas*) appears to have come into vogue subsequently, about the time when the later Saṁhitās were composed. The evidence of metals, therefore, suggests that the Indus people were contemporaneous with the Ṛg Vedic Aryans. Closely connected with iron is the argument based on defensive armour. The use of defensive armour, which was unknown to the Indus people though quite familiar to the Aryans, is pointed out as a proof of the greater antiquity of the former. The Ṛg Vedic Aryans, no doubt, donned some sort of protective armour while engaged in fight. The available evidence, however, seems to suggest that it was not made of metal but of linen or leather. Of the terms denoting armour, *varman* and *atka* are the most ancient. The former signifies 'body armour' 'coat of mail,' 'corselet' in the Ṛg Veda. "Of what material it was made is uncertain; there are references to sewing (*syūta*)<sup>86</sup> which may be reckoned in favour of the use of linen corselets such as those recorded by Herodotus,<sup>87</sup> but there is a later reference to corselets of *ayas*, *loha*, or *rajata*,<sup>88</sup> on which it is doubtful whether much stress can be laid. They may, however, have been either of

85. *Mohenjo-Daro*, I, p. 111.

86. R. V. 1.135<sup>15</sup>, 10.101<sup>8</sup>.

87. Lang: *Homer and His Age*, 150 et seq.

88. *The Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*, 4.1.3.



metal or of leather covered with metal.”<sup>89</sup> Opinion is divided about the denotation of *atka*. Some take it to mean ‘the armour of a warrior as a whole,’ whereas in the opinion of others it refers to an axe.<sup>90</sup> *Kavaca*, another term denoting ‘corselet’ or ‘breast-plate’ occurs in the later *Saṁhitās* and the *Brāhmaṇas*. As the *kavaca-pāśa* or the corselet-strap is referred to in the *Atharva Veda*, it is not unlikely that it was made of linen or leather as described by Herodotus.<sup>91</sup> It is not surprising that no vestiges of body armour of the kind in use among the Aryan warriors which in all likelihood was made of perishable material like linen or leather were found in the ancient sites of the Indus Valley; and consequently no special importance need be attached to the absence of evidence of this description. Again, the absence of any representation of the horse, which played such an important part in the lives of the Aryans, among the animals portrayed on the seals discovered in the ruins of the ancient cities of the Indus Valley is advanced as a proof of the posteriority of the Vedic civilization. It is true that no representation of the horse is found engraved on any of the seals discovered so far; but no definite inference can be drawn from negative premises. The evidence, as Marshall himself admits, is not altogether conclusive; for the camel, too, is unrepresented, though the discovery of a bone of this beast at a depth of 15 feet in the SD Area leaves little doubt that it was known as far back as the Intermediate Period.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, the remains of a horse were, as a matter of fact, ‘found on the surface’ at Mohenjo-Daro. Although Marshall is inclined to believe that it belonged to a quite modern period, he does not completely bar out the possibility of its existence in ancient Mohenjo-Daro; for the discovery by Mackay of a rough terracotta figurine which might represent a horse or a wild ass, and the introduction in the middle of the fourth millennium B.C., of the horse into Mesopotamia which had active commercial and cultural intercourse with the Indus valley render it quite probable that about the same time the horse was also known to the Indus people. The scarcity of the representations of the animal which was eminently military in character on the seals must have been due to the lack of its popularity in commercial and industrial centres like Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa.

89. *Vedic Index*, II, p. 272.

90. *Ibid*, I, p. 16.

91. A. V. 11.10.22; *Vedic Index*, I, p. 143.

92. *Mohenjo-Daro*, I, p. 28.



Much is made of the difference between the religious practices of the Aryans and the Indus people. It is pointed out that the Aryan religion was aniconic, whereas iconism was everywhere apparent at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. It is however doubtful whether the Aryan religion was as completely aniconic as it is generally believed to have been. Although Max Muller is unduly emphatic in his assertion that the religion of the Veda knew no idols,<sup>93</sup> others feel much less positive about it. Bollensen describes, on the contrary, unmistakable evidences of the images of the gods in the Vedic hymns. He draws attention to the common appellation of the gods in the Vedas as *divonarāḥ* or 'men of the sky,' and *ṛpēśas* or 'having the form of men.' He perceives a painted image of Rudra in one of the hymns of the R̥g Veda: "With limbs, many formed, awful, brown, he is painted with shining golden colours,"<sup>94</sup> and of the Maruts in another: "I now pray to the Gods of these (Maruts)"<sup>95</sup> and lays emphasis on *Sandṛś* a term 'in the oldest language' which probably denotes an image of the Gods.' He concludes from the evidence of these and several other instances of the kind that "the Indians did not merely in imagination assign human forms to their gods but also represented them in a sensible manner."<sup>96</sup> Keith is also inclined to believe that though the Vedic religion was normally aniconic, idol worship was not completely discountenanced.<sup>97</sup> While combating the theory, postulating "a chronological progression from the inanimate fetish through the animal form, to a half human, half animal form, and finally to the human form proper," he alludes to the idol of the great Vedic God Indra. "There seems no ground," says he, "for refusing to admit the contemporaneousness of both the ideas; we certainly cannot feel that Indra was pictured by primitive imagination as a bull more readily than as a man of superhuman prowess. As we have seen, in the R̥g Veda we have a definite suggestion of the existence of a primitive idol of Indra but no hint of animal fetishes, living or counterfeit."<sup>98</sup> There is thus considerable difference of opinion among the Vedic scholars about idol worship. Taking all relevant facts into consideration, there is sufficient evi-

93. *Chips From A German Workshop*, I, p. 32.

94. RV, 2.33.9. *Sthīrebhīr angaiḥ pururūpaḥ ugro bābhruḥ-śukrebhīḥ pīṣe hiraṇyāḥ.*

95. *Ibid.*, 5.52. 15. *nū manvānaḥ eṣāṃ devān āśca.*

96. Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, V, pp. 453-4.

97. *The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas*, Vol. I, pp. 30-31.

98. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.



dence for presuming the prevalence of the practice of representing gods by images in the Vedic period.

Another point of difference to which Marshall attaches much importance is the attitude of the Aryans towards the bull and the cow. The Vedic Aryans, it is said, regarded the cow with special veneration, whereas they showed to the bull, which was made the central object of a religious cult in the Indus Valley, no such consideration. It is true that the cow was highly valued by the Aryans for economic reasons; they even refer to it as the mother of the gods; but the cow never attained the divine status in the Vedic age. The term '*aghnyā*,' 'not to be slain,' by which the cow is frequently referred to in the Ṛg Veda, no doubt, indicates the inviolability of the cow.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, it continued to be slaughtered for the sake of its meat, almost up to the end of the Vedic period,<sup>100</sup> and never became 'an object of worship' as Marshall would have us believe.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, the bull was associated with some of the great Vedic gods, specially Rudra as explained in an earlier context. The God was perhaps represented from very early times, as he actually was in the Sūtra period, by a bull.<sup>102</sup> There is, therefore, no reason to believe that the attitude of the Aryans towards the bull differed in any way from that of the Indus people.

Again, the pantheons of the Vedic and the Indus people are said to be different in character. "In the Vedic pantheon" declares Sir John Marshall, "the female element is almost wholly subordinate to the male, and neither the Mother Goddess nor Śiva (with whom, however, the Vedic Rudra was afterwards to be identified) has any place among its members. Among the Indus cults those of the Mother Goddess and Śiva are prominent, and female elements appear to be co-equal with, if not to predominate over, the male".<sup>103</sup> This statement is not borne out by the evidence of the Indus Valley finds, the only source from which it is possible to form an idea of the religion of the Indus people. The numerous terracotta figurines, seals, and other kindred objects unearthed at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa show that the inhabitants

99. Macdonell: *Vedic Mythology*, p. 151.

100. *Vedic Index*, II, p. 145.

101. *Mohenjo-Daro*, II, p. 111.

102. Rudra and his wife are represented by a bull and cow respectively in the *Śūlagava* sacrifice described in the *Gṛhya-Sūtras*.

103. *Mohenjo-Daro*, I, p. 111.



of the Indus Valley offered worship among other things to two principal deities, a male and a female. Though the character of these deities can be deduced to some extent from the anatomical details, dress, ornamentation, etc., there is nothing in them to suggest the equality of the male and female elements or the subordination of the former to the latter. It is not unlikely that the female deity represents *Magna Mater*, but there seems to be little justification for naming her male counterpart Śiva; for, in the first place, the real name of the God is not known; and secondly, his characteristics, as far as they may be inferred from 'the unsatisfactory medium' of seals, proclaim his kinship with Vedic Rudra rather than Puranic Śiva, his supplanter much later. The word, Śiva, no doubt, occurs in the Vedas as an epithet of Rudra, but it has not been transformed into an independent name of the God until the time of the Upaniṣads. The god of the Indus Valley who is strikingly represented on a seal amulet discovered by Mackay at Mohenjo-Daro has been identified by Marshall with Paśupati, the lord of the cattle. The identification is quite plausible, and appears to be confirmed by the respectful attitude of the animals portrayed upon the seal towards the figure of the God seated in the centre. The scene representing the god surrounded by the animals seems, in fact, to call for an identification of the kind proposed by Marshall:—

"The God, who is three-faced, is seated on a low Indian throne in a typical attitude of *yoga*, with legs bent double beneath him, heel to heel, with toes turned downwards. His arms are outstretched, his hands, with thumbs to front, resting on his knees. From wrist to shoulder the arms are covered with bangles, eight smaller and three larger; over his breast is triangular pectoral or perhaps a series of necklaces or torques, . . . . and round his waist a double band. The lower limbs are bare and the phallus (*ūrdhavameḍhra*) seemingly exposed, but it is possible that what appears to be the phallus is in reality the end of the waist-band. Crowning his head is a pair of horns meeting in a tall head-dress. To either side of the God are four animals, an elephant and tiger on his proper right, a rhinoceros and buffalo on his left. Beneath the throne are two deer standing with heads regarant and horns turned to the centre".<sup>104</sup>

Sir John Marshall calls attention to certain features which this god, in his opinion, possesses in common with Śiva: (i) his faces, (ii) his yogic posture, and (iii) his association with animals.

104. *Mohenjo-Daro*, I, p. 52.



(i) *His faces*.—Marshall labours hard to prove that this three-faced image is Śiva, but fails to arrive at any satisfactory solution. He is inclined to believe that it represents a composite deity, 'a syncretic form of three deities rolled into one,' foreshadowing the later Pauranic *trimūrtis*—Śiva, Brahmā and Viṣṇu.<sup>105</sup> Though the composite character of the deity is quite evident, it is extremely doubtful whether he can be taken as the representative of an incipient trinity. The three faces of the deity can be more satisfactorily explained by assuming that he represents the Vedic God Rudra. It may be remembered that Rudra was also known as Tryambaka, a name the exact significance of which is not clearly explained by ancient commentators. The term '*ambā*' is used in the Vedas in the sense of 'a mother',<sup>106</sup> and Tryambaka must denote a god born of three mothers. This clearly indicates a syncretism of three deities of different origin. The Vedic Rudra is thus seen to be a composite god who is, in fact, in the language of Bhandarkar (Jr.) 'three Gods rolled into one, originally born of three different *ambikās* or mothers.'<sup>107</sup> This is indirectly corroborated by the evidence of *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* where Rudra is represented to have absorbed Bhava and Śarva, two deities of similar character.<sup>108</sup>

(ii) *The yogic posture*.—The yogic posture of this 'pre-Aryan God' as Marshall terms him, is said to be another link which connects him with the historic Śiva. "Śiva," declares Marshall, "is pre-eminently the prince of Yogis—the typical ascetic and self-mortifier whence his names Mahātapah, Mahāyogi." "Like Śaivism itself, Yoga had its origin among the pre-Aryan population, and this explains why it was not until the Epic Period that it came to play an important role in Indo-Aryan religion".<sup>109</sup> It must be pointed out that no indubitable proof has been so far advanced to show that the Indus people were not Aryans. Dogmatic assertions, unsupported by the evidence of facts, command no consideration. Śiva's predilection to *yoga* is not a novel feature of his character which he suddenly developed in the Epic Period. The word *yoga* in the sense of 'mystic union of the individual soul with the Brahman'

105. *Mohenjo-Daro*, I, p. 53.

106. RV. 2.41.<sup>16</sup>

107. *Some Aspects Of Ancient Indian Culture*, p. 42.

108. SB., 1.7.3.8; Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, IV, p. 339.

109. *Mohenjo-Daro*, I, pp. 53-4.



does not occur in the Vedas; but yogic practices were not unknown to the Aryans. Two classes of people mentioned in the Vedas, the *munis* and the *yatis*, appear to have been the harbingers of the Yoga System which became already dominant by the time of the Upaniṣads. The former whose powers and practices are briefly described in the Ṛg Veda were probably a set of wandering ascetics and devoted themselves to the cult of *yoga*. The *munis* wore long hair; they were either naked or clad in brown or soiled garments. Transported by divine impulse, they pursued the course of the winds; they could fly through the air and perceive all forms; they were the friends of Gods and moved along the paths of the *Apsaras*, the *Gandharvas* and wild animals; and broke the unbending things by virtue of the cup of poison which they drank in the company of Rudra.<sup>110</sup> The evidence about the character of the *yatis* is less clear. They are said to have been a tribe of people connected with the Bhṛgu;<sup>111</sup> this is however doubtful for in the hymn of creation in the tenth book of the Ṛg Veda, the *yatis* are said to cause 'all existing things to grow.'<sup>112</sup> In the later Sāṃhitās and the Brāhmaṇas, they figure as the enemies of Indra who is said to have slain them and cast their bodies before the wolves, as they were opposed to Vedic rites and sacrifices.<sup>113</sup> They were probably a sect of ascetics who advocated some esoteric doctrine opposed to the prevailing cult of the sacrifice.

It is obvious that some system of discipline analogous to *yoga* was known to the Aryans from the days of the Ṛg Veda; and that the devotees of the school were intimately associated with Rudra. The yogic posture of the seated god on the Mohenjo-Daro seal need not be taken as a special consideration for identifying him with Śiva. He could have more appropriately represented the Vedic Rudra, the friend and companion of the wandering *munis*.

(iii) *Association with Animals*.—The animals surrounding the Mohenjo-Daro God are said to be another index of his identity with

110. R.V. x, 136; Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, IV, p. 318.

111. *Vedic Index*, II, p. 185.

112. R.V. 10.72.7

113. In his commentary on Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa, Śāyana explains the meaning of *yati* as *veda-viruddha-niyamopetān* (8.1.4). *yajña-virodhi-janān* (13.4.17). *karma-virodhi-janān* (14.11.28) and 'jyotiṣtomādy-akṛtvā-prakārāntareṣu vartamānān brāhmaṇān' (18.1.9). While commenting on Taitt. Saṃh. 2.4.9.2 he says *Pāramahamsya-rūpaṃ caturthāśramaṃ prāptānān yeṣāṃ Yatināṃ mukhe Brahmātmakapratipādayo vedānta śāstra-kāṣṭi.*

—Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, IV, p. 491 f.



Śiva. 'Śiva' says Marshall, 'is not only prince of Yogis ; he is also lord of the beasts (*paśupati*), and it is seemingly in reference to this aspect of his nature that the four animals—the elephant, tiger, rhinoceros, and buffalo—are grouped about him. In historic times the title *Paśupati* meant "lord of cattle," and by analogy *paśu* was applied to the human herds of which Śiva was the herdsman ; but in the Vedic hymns *paśu* signified a beast of the jungle, and it may reasonably be inferred, therefore, that at that time the deity was regarded as the master of wild no less than tame animals. Rudra, the Vedic God, whose cult was amalgamated and identified with that of Śiva, also bore the title of *paśupati*, and this may conceivably have been one of the reasons for identifying him with Śiva.'<sup>114</sup>

Marshall, it is evident, finds the presence of wild animals by the side of the God whom he styles 'pre-Aryan Śiva,' a little incongruous, for historic Śiva is, in his opinion, only the lord of human herds and not of wild animals. To justify the presence of the animals around his 'pre-Aryan Śiva,' he is obliged to allude to Śiva's connection with Vedic Rudra who was the master of the wild as well as tame animals, and who 'also bore the title of *Paśupati*.'

The conception of *Paśupati*, it must be pointed out, is essentially Vedic ; and the various stages of its development are clearly traceable in the Vedas. The idea seems to have been originally associated with *Prajāpati*, the lord of creatures. The cattle, according to the *Taittiriya Saṁhitā*, belong to *Prajāpati*,<sup>115</sup> who seems to have entrusted them, at first to *Vāyu* ; but on the birth of *Agni-Kumāra*, he made over to him the lordship of cattle and bestowed on him the name *Paśupati*.<sup>116</sup> The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* connects the name indirectly with the plants, and suggests that *Paśupati* was himself a plant. "Inasmuch as he (*Prajāpati*) gave him (*Agni-Kumāra*) that name, the plants became his form, for *Paśupati* is the plants. Hence, when beasts obtain plants, they become lords (or strong) ".<sup>117</sup> As *Agni-Kumāra* and *Rudra* were

114. *Mohenjo-Daro*, I, p. 54.

115. *Taitt. Saṁh.* 3.1.5.

116. *Ibid.*, 6.4.

117. Muir : *Original Sanskrit Texts*, IV, pp. 340, 341; SB. 6.1.3.12.

*Tam abravīt Paśupatiḥ asi itī | tad yad asya tan nāma  
akarod ośadhayas tad-rūpam abhavan | ośadhayo vai  
Paśupatis tasmād yadā paśavaḥ ośadhir labhante 'tha.  
patiṃyanti* C{H}

0. Jangamwadi Math Collection. Digitized by eGangotri



identical, Paśupati became one of the important names of Rudra, and he was regarded as the sole lord of cattle.

Rudra's sovereignty over cattle is recognised in the R̥g Veda, though he is not referred to by his name of Paśupati. In the later Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas, his authority is extended; bipeds, including men as well as quadrupeds and aquatic animals are said to be under his special jurisdiction; and he is commonly spoken of as Paśupati. With the advance of philosophical thought, and the exaltation of Rudra as the supreme lord of the universe, the concept of Paśupati, being liberated from its grosser elements is transformed in the Upaniṣads into a metaphysical bond uniting the universal with the individual souls.

The other points of minor importance which Marshall is not able to account for in a satisfactory manner may be noticed here, as they also disclose Rudra's identity with the God of Mohenjo-Daro.<sup>118</sup> The pair of horns crowning the head of the latter are, as pointed out by Marshall, certainly his emblems; but they cannot be regarded as the forerunners of Śiva's *triśūla*. They are not only the emblems of the God, but also the links which connect him with his theriomorphic form. Rudra, it may be remembered, is represented in the Vedas as a bull (*vr̥ṣabha*). The pair of horns of the God of Mohenjo-Daro are the symbols of his bovine form which proclaim his identity with the Vedic bull-god Rudra. Similarly, the deer or ibexes beneath his seat point in the same direction. They represent Prajāpati and his daughter. Rudra, according to a well-known legend preserved in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, pierced the former with his deadly arrow at the instance of the Gods who were scandalized by his incestuous intercourse with his own daughter.<sup>119</sup>

To another class of finds discovered in the cities of the Indus Valley belong 'the emblems of creation' which Marshall closely associates with the worship of the *Magna Mater* and the Male God of Mohenjo-Daro described above.<sup>120</sup> These fall into two classes, the phallic and the ring-stones. The shape and the appearance of the former seem to bear out Marshall's contention that they represent the *liṅga*; but it is more than doubtful whether the ring-stones can be regarded as *yonis*. They have no doubt a hole in the centre; however, there is no justification for imagining that every

118. *Mohenjo-Daro*, I, p. 55.

119. Haug: (AB., 3.3.33), pp. 217 ff.

120. *Mohenjo-Daro*, I, p. 57.



hole in a stone is the representation of *yonī*. Mackay, for one, does not believe that they are *yonis*; and he suggests that 'they may have been employed to build up columns.'<sup>121</sup> Although the phalli or the representations of the male organ were quite familiar to the Indus people, it is not at all certain that they were the devotees of the *liṅga* in the sense in which it is generally understood; for there is scarcely any evidence of the worship of *liṅga* without its necessary accompaniment *yonī*. Representations severally of the male and female organs of sex have no claim to be regarded as *liṅga*. No specimens of the *liṅga* properly so called have been so far discovered in the Indus cities; and until a phallic emblem is found in close association with a ring-stone 'the matter' as Mackay puts it, 'cannot be definitely settled'.<sup>122</sup>

Nevertheless, the phallic stones are not entirely devoid of significance. Though it is not possible to treat them as *liṅgas* in the proper sense, their striking resemblance to the male organ raises a strong presumption that they had been fashioned deliberately to serve some definite purpose. It is not improbable that they were employed as objects of religious worship before the cult of the phallus had taken definite shape. They may, therefore, be regarded for the present as symbols foreshadowing the advent of full-blown cult of the *liṅga*.

The phallic stones thus appear to disclose the prevalence of a rudimentary type of *liṅga* worship, in the Indus cities, though their connection with the Mother Goddess and the Male God of Mohenjo-Daro is by no means clear. They do not however justify the belief that the Indus people were not Aryan in race. The Aryans, it is asserted, abhorred phallic worship; and consequently the people of the Indus Valley who were devoted to the cult of the phallus could not have belonged to the Aryan stock.<sup>123</sup> This belief is, however, utterly unfounded. Though no mention is made of the phallic worship in the Vedas, the fundamental idea underlying the phallic symbol was quite familiar to the Aryan priests and singers; it may be said, in fact, to be one of the basic conceptions of the Aryan faith. The problem of creation had engaged their attention from very early times. They wanted to know how the universe came to be what it was. They were familiar with the genesis of animal and human life which was caused by the union

121. *The Indus Civilisation*, p. 78.

122. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

123. *Mohenjo-Daro*, I, p. 111.



of the sexes. They imagined that the world, nay, the very gods who controlled its destinies, must have had a similar origin. Characteristically enough, the Vedic sages, when they attempted to account for the origin of the world, traced the development of the formless void into unity to *tapas* and placed first the birth of *kāma*, the primal germ of the mind (*manaso retaḥ prathamam*) which was the bond that connected the entity with non-entity. Out of the union of these two—the self-supporting principle lying stretched beneath and energy above—sprang the gods and the whole creation.<sup>124</sup> The imagery employed in this hymn is taken from actual life. Similarly the birth of the gods is traced to the union of Father Dyaus with Mother Pṛthvī; of the Maruts to the intercourse of Rudra with Pṛṣni; and of Agni to the two *araṇis*, the upper male and the lower female.<sup>125</sup> In all these cases, clearly the union of the male and the female is meant and some of the Gods like Agni noted for their extraordinary virility are styled as *sahasramuṣkas*.<sup>126</sup> In the later Saṃhitās and the Brāhmaṇas this idea is further emphasized in detail. The cycle of stories connected with the incestuous intercourse of Prajāpati with Uṣas shows clearly how popular the theme was with the Vedic bards.

The idea of procreation not only affected the Aryan thought but it tended to degenerate into obscenity in some of their important religious rites. Sexual intercourse was actually carried out in some of the sacrifices. The principal wife of the king performing *Aśvamēdha* lying down by the side of the horse, and in the *Mahāvratā*, the words and actions of a student and a hetaera are instances in point. These instances are enough to expose the holowness of the contention that the phallic worship was abhorrent to the Aryan religious sentiment.

The phallic emblem, on the contrary, grew naturally out of the sacrificial cult, and fastened itself upon Rudra, on account of his close association with Agni. It arose, literally, in the fire pit, and having gradually divested itself of its sacerdotal character, passed on to Rudra, the alter ego of Agni, and became the permanent symbol of his creed. The origin and development of the *liṅga* or phallus are definitely indicated in the later Vedic literature especially the Brāhmaṇas. The idea seems to have had its

124. RV. 10.129, 3-6

125. *Ibid.*, 3.29, 2-3

126. *Ibid.*, 8.19, 32



genesis in heat which gave birth, according to the hymn of creation cited already, to *kāma* or love. A number of texts can be cited that leave no room for doubt that the sacrificial cult was suffused throughout with sex symbolism which ultimately took the material shape of the *liṅga*.<sup>127</sup>

The cult of the phallus is thus seen to be the natural product of the evolution of primitive ideas inherent in the Aryan religion from the beginning. And when with the decline of the sacrificial religion, Agni lost his importance and receded to the background, his alter ego, Rudra, who rose to prominence on the incoming tide of the Bhakti philosophy, inherited from him all the phallic associations of an earlier age. That is how Rudra came to be symbolised by the *liṅga* which has been so prominent in later Śaivism.

127. The following texts which clearly indicate the manner in which *liṅga* gradually developed from the sacrificial fire may be consulted with advantage, SB. 3.4.34, 1.4.39, 6.6.2, 8.9, 7.5.238; Taitt. Sam. 2.2.10.



## CHAPTER 5

### *Rudra's family.*

**His Wife.**—It is generally believed that no goddess is associated with Rudra in the Vedic literature except Rudrāṇī who makes her appearance for the first time late in the Sūtra Period; but the term Rudrāṇī, which is formed merely by adding to the name of Rudra the feminine suffix *-āṇī*, meaning 'wife of Rudra' is not the proper name of the goddess who is perhaps identical with Ambikā, the sister-wife of Rudra mentioned in the Yajur Veda Saṁhitās. Ambikā is, as a matter of fact, not unknown to the Ṛg Veda where her name actually occurs in a slightly different form as Ambā, coupled with that of Rudra-Tryambaka. As the words '*ambā*' and '*ambī*' both denoting 'a mother' are met with in the Ṛg Veda,<sup>128</sup> Ambā and Ambikā which are mentioned in conjunction with Rudra-Tryambaka must have been identical. Though it is stated in the Yajur Veda that Ambikā was the sister of Rudra, the relationship between them is not clearly defined; for, on the one hand, the prayer of the unmarried maidens addressed to her conjointly with Rudra, soliciting husbands, suggests that she was the wife of the God; and on the other, the etymological meaning of her name indicates that she was his mother. She was perhaps his mother and sister as well as his wife at the same time, a position not quite unfamiliar to the gods of the Vedic pantheon.<sup>129</sup>

A proper estimate of the part played by Ambikā in the religious life of the Aryans cannot be formed without at least a rudimentary knowledge of her qualities and the attitude which she assumed towards her devotees. Very little is, however, known of her or the rites connected with her worship from the Vedic literature. She figures only in the *Tryambaka-homa* where offerings are made to her conjointly with her brother and husband Rudra, so that they may not slay the sacrificer and his family. The sacrificer bakes in the sacrificial fire as many cakes as there are members in his family; removes them all into a dish, and taking a fire-brand from the sacrificial fire, he carries them aside towards

128. RV. 7.59.12

129. The cases may be recalled of Prajāpati who was the husband of his own daughter Uṣas; and of Pūṣan who was the husband of his mother as well as of his sister Sūryā.



the north. He keeps one of the cakes aside, and offers the rest on *pālāśa* leaves at the cross-roads, cutting out a bit from each of them. He then buries the additional cake representing Rudra's favourite animal, the mole, in an ant-hill, in order to free his cattle from his darts. Then he collects the bits of cake, and returns to the sacrificial fire, expecting the satisfied God to make him rich and prosperous, and invokes his blessing on his own family and cattle. The members of the sacrificer's family as well as unmarried girls walk thrice round the sacrificial fire, the former begging God Tryambaka to free them from death and not from immortality and the latter to bestow on them husbands. Finally, the sacrificer takes the bits of cake collected from the offerings at the cross roads, and having packed them into two net-work baskets (one for Rudra and the other for Ambikā), ties them to the two ends of a bamboo staff or the beam of a balance to show probably the equality of the two deities, and goes out towards the north until he meets a tree, or a stake, or a bamboo or an ant-hill and fastens them thereon. He then requests Rudra to depart to his own country and returns again home.<sup>130</sup>

This brief account of the *Tryambaka-homa* makes it clear that Ambikā like her brother and husband Rudra was primarily a deity of death. The cakes offered to her during the sacrifice were intended to appease her and secure immunity from death. The real character of Ambikā is clearly brought out in the *Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa* where it is stated that she was autumn with which Rudra smote his victims. In the commentary on the *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā*, it is said that Ambikā would take the form of Autumn and kill men and animals by producing diseases.<sup>131</sup> The cross roads where offerings were made to Rudra appear to have been as much her favourite places of resort as his. The tree, the bamboo thicket, and the ant-hill were perhaps sacred to them; and the maidens desirous of securing conjugal happiness looked forward to them for the gift of choice husbands. As Rudrāṇī, Ambikā took a prominent part in the *Śūlagava* sacrifice, celebrated in autumn, for the increase of cattle. It is evident that Ambikā was a vegetation deity who

130. S.B. 2.6.2.1-18.

131. Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, IV, pp. 321, n. 40.

*Śarad vai asya Ambikā svasā| tasya vai ēṣa hinasti|* TB. 1.6.10.4.

The commentator on the corresponding passage in the *Vāj. Saṁh.* 3.57 states,

*Śarad rūpam prūpya jar (qu? jvar-)ādīkam utpādya tam*

*nīrodhinām hanti*



spread death; and that like all the deities of her class, she took a motherly interest, when appeased by proper rites and sacrifices, in her devotees and blessed them with health and prosperity. Her association with the cross-roads and the cattle are of special interest as they bring her directly into contact with the 'village mothers' who are worshipped at present in every village all over the country.

The village Gods are generally believed to be the most ancient elements in the Hindu religion. They are, in fact, said to represent the religion of the pre-Aryan inhabitants of India which has survived almost unaffected by the contact of later Aryan religions down to the present day.<sup>131a</sup>

The religion of the Mother Goddess is very probably non-Aryan in origin, but it is extremely doubtful whether it flourished in our country before the advent of the Aryans. The available evidence on the subject seems to point out that the Mother Goddess entered India in the company of the Vedic Gods. To understand her position in its true perspective, and form an intelligible estimate of her character, it is of utmost importance to take cognizance of her relationship with the great Mother Goddesses that were worshipped in ancient times in the neighbouring countries especially in the west of Asia. Though her affinities to the national deities of 'the Semitic races and the great empires of Egypt, Nineveh, and Babylon' are indicated in most general terms,<sup>132</sup> her resemblance to the great Goddess Ishtar with whom she appears to have had more intimate contact has received little or no attention. A comparison of the characters of both the deities, and of the prominent features of their respective cults reveals that, notwithstanding the differences of time and country, they are fundamentally akin to each other. The Mother Goddess who is worshipped all over the country, despite the many names by which she is referred to, is invariably called 'amma', the Mother. Her natural place of habitation is a tree, though she is commonly housed in a shrine of moderate dimensions, built invariably outside the precincts of the village. The temple of the village deity is a structure of brick and mortar devoid of any decoration excepting the stucco images of the lion, her favourite vehicle and emblem, on the walls and the roof. Though a kind mother and generous benefactor when propitiated with suitable gifts and appropriate sacrifices, she is terrible in her wrath and deals out death and destruction by means of epidemics of which she

131a. Cf. Christopher Dawson: *The Age of the Gods*, pp. 103-04.

132. Whitehead: *The Village Gods of South India*, p. 11.



is the mistress. Once in every year, a festival is celebrated in her honour during the harvest season, when, besides buffaloes specially sacred to her, goats, sheep and cocks are offered in large numbers. The *pūjāris* or the priestly ministrants who officiated in her temples were formerly women; and while the service was in progress naked women had to sing and dance before the deity.<sup>133</sup> Vestiges of the ministration of women in the temple of the village goddess still lurk in certain parts of South India. In Kerala, particularly in Travancore, though the Brahmans officiate as priests in the temples of Bhagavatī, a deity whose identity with the village goddess is generally recognized, the *Veliceppādu* or oracle, is either a woman or a man dressed in the garments of a woman.<sup>134</sup> More important still is the custom of fulfilling the vow of *karagam* that is prevalent among certain communities in the Tamil country. To propitiate the Goddess, and secure her blessings on their conjugal life, young men about to be married are dressed in woman's apparel and taken in procession to the temple of the village deity with a pot of water bedecked with flowers on their heads. Another practice which has very nearly died down is the dedication of maids as *Basivis* to the service of the deity. A maid so dedicated never marries, but becomes a consecrated prostitute attached to the temple. She lives with whomsoever she pleases, and her offspring are regarded as the legitimate descendants of her father. An interesting feature of the *jātru* or the periodical festival celebrated in honour of the village deity in the Telugu country must not be left unnoticed in this connection. At the close of the festival, when the image of the deity is carried in a procession to the boundary of the village, the *Āsādis*, or the outcastes who officiate as priests during the function sing an obscene song in praise of her and indulge in indecent jests at the expense of the chief men of the village. It is said in explanation of this practice that the obscene song and jests are intended to please the Goddess. The indulgence in obscenity of this kind is not unknown in other parts of South India. In Kerala, for instance, it used to be the custom until quite recently, to sing obscene songs during the *Pūram* festival (or the festival of Bhagavatī) at Sertally. At Cranganore, on the West Coast, the right of distribu-

133. ఆలాకింపక మొక్కరాదు నిజభక్త్యానేకసంప్రతిమై;  
 నాలాకించి న జిత్త మెట్లుగునొ కామానేకసంయుక్తిమై;  
 నేలాగోయి కిరాట ? మానుదము; సంవీక్షింతమో చెప్పుమా ?  
 (ప్రభాకరస్వామిర మండలము దేవీశంభునాథముఁ).

—*Kṛidābhirāmam*, p. 44.

134. I am indebted to Dr. C. Achyuta Menon and Mr. G. Harihara Sastri for this information.



ting the *prasādam* during the Bhagavatī festival is held as a monopoly of the women-folk of certain families; and they are obliged to answer any question on sex matters put at the time of the distribution of the *prasādam*.<sup>135</sup>

The village goddess is associated with a number of male deities dependent upon her. Of these Karuppannan, Maduraivīran, Ayyanār, and Pōturāju are the most prominent. The first two do not rise above the level of 'subordinate male attendants'; and they need not be taken into consideration here. Although Ayyanār has a separate shrine of his own and does not generally figure as a dependent of the village deity, he appears to have originally belonged to the same class as Karuppannan and Maduraivīran; for occasionally he also takes on the role of a 'subordinate deity'.<sup>136</sup> The position of Pōturāju (buffalo-king), however, is somewhat different. It is true that he is never represented as an independent deity, entitled to get a separate sacrifice;<sup>137</sup> but that must be rather attributed to his union with the goddess than to his subordinate position. Pōturāju, it may be noted, 'figures sometimes as the brother and sometimes as the husband, of the village goddess'.<sup>138</sup> The union between the sister-wife and the brother-husband is so complete that they are regarded as an inseparable couple who can be propitiated by a common sacrifice. The village goddess, according to popular mythology, is, in fact, identical with Durgā and Pōturāju with Kālabhairava.<sup>139</sup>

The identification of the village deity with Durgā is based upon substantial grounds. Popular legends connect her with Ādi Śakti or the primordial female energy from which sprang up the whole creation. The village goddess like Durgā is said to be a manifestation of Ādi Śakti; and the strong similarity of their character, attributes and functions clearly show that they are akin to each other. Durgā, like the village goddess, is called the 'Mother' who is kind and benevolent. Prone to anger, she frequently forgets her motherly benevolence, and assuming the character of a fearsome demon of death, she strikes down without mercy men and animals by means of epidemics and diseases. She is a goddess of death and newly married women propitiate her through fasts and vows so

135. My thanks are due to Dr. C. Achyuta Menon, Mr. P. Krishnan Nair and Mr. G. Harihara Sastri for furnishing me with this information.

136. Whitehead: *The Village Gods of South India*, p. 105.

137. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

138. *Ibid.*

139. V. Prabhakara Sastri, *Cāṭyaśāstram*, p. 125.



that she may leave their husbands untouched. Her vehicle is the lion and favourite victim, the buffalo; and she is believed to take delight in bloody sacrifices. Durgā, however, differs from the village deity in one respect. She is a warrior, a commander of hosts, who leads her devotees to victory. The Daśara festival observed by the Hindus all over India, is celebrated in her honour. The village goddess is not also perhaps wanting in military qualities altogether. She is usually represented like Durgā with all the thirty-two weapons, and Ayyanār, her coadjutant and erstwhile subordinate, is a commander of forces; he is armed among other weapons with bow and arrows; and his temple is usually surrounded by clay or wooden images of elephants, horses, and mounted warriors.

With this brief account of the village goddess may be compared the following description of Ishtar, the great goddess of the Babylonians and Assyrians. Ishtar is described in the cuneiform tablets as the first-born of heaven, and first among the gods. She is called the gracious mother of creation, the mother of the gods and of mankind.<sup>140</sup> It is said that she 'created man out of clay and sorrowed with him and made intercession on his behalf before Enlil.'<sup>141</sup> Hence her proud claim that mankind belonged to her.<sup>142</sup> As the goddess of fertility and vegetation, she was the mistress of 'springs, mountains, and seas'; she presided over streams and irrigation canals, caused the plants to grow and gave life to the people; she protected the shepherd, and offered drink to the cattle and food to the nestlings. She 'directed all begetting', and 'became the patroness of child-birth, love and family life.'<sup>143</sup> Although Ishtar was generally inclined to befriend men, she became terrible in her wrath when provoked and struck down the people who disobeyed her commands with wasting disease.<sup>144</sup> She was perhaps assisted in her destructive activities by the Anunnaki, a group of spirits of the underworld, hostile to mankind.<sup>145</sup> The Anunnaki, of whom she is said to have been the mistress, very probably acquired by their association with the disease bringing spirits of the underworld some of their evil qualities, and employed them in compassing the ruin of people who incurred her displeasure. It was

140. Jastrow: *Religion of Babylonians and Assyrians*, pp. 83, 204-205.

141. Budge: *Babylonian Life and History*, p. 263.

142. Jastrow: *Religion of the Babylonians and Assyrians*, p. 501.

143. Langdon: *Tammus and Ishtar*, pp. 55, 57, 59, 71.

144. Jastrow: *Religion of the Babylonians and Assyrians*, p. 84.

145. *Ibid.*, p. 186.



due to the power which she exercised over these evil spirits that she was able to release from their power people stricken with disease. Nothing is known about the architectural peculiarities of her temple; it was perhaps a zikkurat like the other Babylonian and Assyrian temples. The lion which was her sacred mount was probably portrayed on its walls as in the case of the shrines of Durgā and the village deity. A large number of priestesses called Ishtaritum or sacred harlots dedicated to her service resided within the precincts of her temple and carried on her worship. Besides the prostitution carried on by the Ishtaritum, custom demanded of every woman, whatever her station in life, to submit to the embraces of a stranger; and offer to the goddess as sacrifice 'the first fruits of her body by yielding herself to a stranger before giving herself to a husband.'<sup>146</sup> Ishtar was associated with a male deity who was her brother, son and husband at the same time. His name and character varied with the country where he and his mother or sister-spouse were worshipped together. In Babylon, he was known as Tammus, the shadowy husband of the inconstant Ishtar who meted out to him death every year. In Assyria, it was the powerful and warlike national god Assur who figured as her husband; though a fertility deity and 'a form of Tammus in origin', as pointed out by Mackenzie,<sup>147</sup> Assur did not lose his individuality and allow himself to be eclipsed by her. He maintained his supremacy, as became his virile character, over the Assyrian pantheon, and never suffered her to take precedence over him in the worship offered by their followers. With the fall of Assyria, and the establishment of Achaemenian empire, Ishtar and her spouse assumed Iranian garments and accepted the loyal devotion of their worshippers as Anāhitā and Mithra.

The cult of Ishtar as Anāhitā presents certain features which bring her into close contact with Durgā and her numerous manifestations in the villages of South India. She was a blood-thirsty goddess who demanded animal sacrifices in return for the favours she bestowed upon her devotees. The kings and princes on whom she conferred benefits and the large number of horses, oxen and lambs they slaughtered are enumerated in the *Ābān Yāsht*.<sup>148</sup>

146. Delaporte: *Mesopotamia*, p. 88.

147. *Myths of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 348.

148. Darmesteter: *The Zend-Avesta* (SBE, xxiii), *Ābān Yāsht*. pp. 52-84.  
Haoshyangha, Yima-Kshaeta, Azi-Dahāka, Thraitaona, Keresāspa,  
Frangrasyan, Kavi-Usa, Husravah, Sons of Varesaka, Jamāsp, Ashavazdah



She liked the buffalo above all other animals. In the district of Akilesene which was granted to her temple by the Great King, the sacred buffaloes of (Ishtar) Anāhitā wandered at large, and the animals required as victims for her sacrifice had to be captured by hunting.<sup>149</sup>

The animal sacrifices were offered, according to the Abān Yasht mentioned above, by princes who were desirous of subverting the authority of their enemies and acquiring domination over the earth. They solicited the help of Anāhitā because she was Ishtar, the goddess of War and arbitress of the destinies of nations. She was 'the mistress of countries' and rose to prominence during the age of the Assyrian emperors. She became the spouse of Assur the national god of Assyria; accompanied the Assyrian armies in a

and Thrīta, and Yoista are said to have propitiated Anāhitā (i.e. Ishtar) by offering 100 horses, 1,000 oxen and 10,000 lambs as sacrificial victims.

Cf. the bloody sacrifices offered at Vijayanagara to propitiate Durgā during the 16th century. According to Nuniz, who perhaps gives an exaggerated account of the sacrifice, the number of animals sacrificed during the nine days of Daśarā festival are as follows:—

Day.	Buffaloes.	Sheep.	Goats.
1	9	9	9
2	18	18	18
3	36	36	36
4	72	72	72
5	144	144	144
6	288	288	288
7	576	576	576
8	1152	1152	1152
9	2304	2304	2304
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 4599	<hr/> 4599	<hr/> 4599
	<hr/> Grand Total = 13,797 <hr/>		

These figures appear to be greatly exaggerated. Paes, who visited Vijayanagara about the same time as Nuniz, mentions only the slaughter of buffaloes and sheep. The number offered as victims daily to the deity is said to be 24 buffaloes and 150 sheep. On the last day 240 buffaloes and 4,500 sheep are said to have been slaughtered. (See Sewell's *Forgotten Empire*, pp. 266, 274-5, 377).

149. ERE, I, pp. 414-15. The buffalo sacrificed every year for the village deity, it may be noted, is selected in advance and is allowed to roam freely in the fields of the village for eight or nine months, and is captured at the time of the sacrifice.



chariot drawn by powerful steeds, arranged the order of battle, and encouraged the warriors to fight. In the hour of danger, the Assyrian emperors turned to her for help; and, in response to their appeals, she appeared to them in their dreams, and cheered them up with words of assurance and promises of victory.<sup>150</sup>

Ishtar is thus seen to be a mother goddess, like Durgā and the village deity, primarily connected with fertility and vegetation. She fertilized the seed of men, purified the womb of women, and presided over marriage and child-birth. Though married to several husbands, specially to her own brother, she preserved her maidenhood undefiled, and was known as the Virgin like Durgā and the village goddess; she was also the mistress of the sacred harlots, and encouraged promiscuous intercourse between the sexes. Ishtar was a destroyer like her Indian compeers. She commanded the evil spirits disseminating disease, and compassed, through their instrumentality, the ruin of the people that incurred her displeasure. Like them, she was fond of bloody sacrifices and valued above all other animals the buffalo as a victim most acceptable to her. She had, in common with them, the lion as her special emblem and like Durgā, took considerable delight in war.

The resemblance between Ishtar and the Hindu goddesses Durgā and the Village Mother, is indeed so striking that it cannot be disregarded as superficial. The similarity is sometimes attributed to the prevalence of common cultural conditions in the environment in which they had their origin. Sir John Marshall, for instance, is inclined to believe that 'they originated in a matriarchal state of society', and that they had no place at first in the Aryan pantheon though they were admitted into it later due to the infusion of the pre-Aryan population into the Aryan fold.<sup>151</sup> Nothing, however, is definitely known about the social and religious conditions of pre-Aryan India; and the available information, meagre as it is, clearly indicates that the Mother Goddess, nay, the great Ishtar herself, accompanied the first band of Aryans to the plains of Hindustan. Notwithstanding the assumption that the Mother Goddess finds no place in the Vedic pantheon, she appears, as a matter of fact, in the R̥g Veda under many names some of which actually disclose her identity and indicate the direction from which she came to India. Two deities mentioned in the hymns of the

150. Jastrow: *Religion of Babylonian and Assyria*, p. 204.

151. *Mohenjo-daro*, pp. 51, 111.



Ṛg Veda deserve special consideration in this context, as they manifest distinct signs of their affinity with the Mother Goddess. Sinīvālī, a deity whose identity has not yet been definitely established, claims attention first. She is described as a broad-hipped, fair-armed, fair-fingered, and prolific deity, a sister of the gods and the queen of men. She is invoked for progeny and is believed to assist the birth of children.<sup>152</sup> In the later Vedic texts Sinīvālī is associated with the moon; and is said to represent the deity presiding over the first day of the new moon. She appears in the Atharva Veda as the wife of Viṣṇu,<sup>153</sup> and in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Medinīkośa* as the wife of Skanda and Śiva respectively.<sup>154</sup> Though in the later Vedic texts Sinīvālī is associated with the moon, it is urged that in the Ṛg Veda there is nothing to indicate any such connection.<sup>154a</sup> This is not, however, true; for the name Sinīvālī itself distinctly points at her lunar origin, a fact which has escaped the attention of Vedic scholars, as they have failed to note that it is a loan word from a non-Aryan language. Sanskrit etymologists who are quite uncertain about the exact significance of the word offer divergent interpretations which notwithstanding their differences agree in connecting it with the moon. According to Mukuṭa, Sinīvālī denotes *candrakalā* or an indistinct digit of the moon; Kṣīrasvāmin takes it to mean a white streak (of the moon); and Rāmāśramin states that *sinī* is the digit of the moon, and therefore she who wears it is Sinīvālī.<sup>155</sup> In the opinion of these commentators, therefore, Sinīvālī means a night (or may be a deity)

152. RV. 2.33.6-7 See Griffith, *Ṛg Veda*, I, p. 299; Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts*, V, p. 346; Maconell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 125.

153. AV, 7.46<sup>3</sup>

154. *Mahābhārata*, III, 219, 50-51.

*saṣṭhīm yān brāhmanāḥ prāhur-lakṣmīm āśām sukhapradām*  
*Sinīvālīm kukūm caiva sad-vṛttīm aparājitām ||*  
*yadā skandaḥ patir-labdhaḥ śāśvato devasenayā*  
*tadā tām āśrayallakṣmīḥ svayam devī sarirīṇī ||*

*Medinī*: la *catuṣkam* 166—

*Sinīvālī tu dṛṣṭendukalā'mā Durgayoh striyām*

154a. Macdonell: *Vedic Mythology*, p. 125.

155. Amarakośa with the commentary of Bhānujī Dikshit.

(Bombay, Nirṇayasāgara Press edition), p. 46;

*Sinī candrakalā sū bālā alpā atra*

—Mukuṭa.

*Sinī sitā asty asyām*

—Kṣīrasvāmin.

*Sinī candrakalā tām dhārayati sinīvālī.*

—Rāmāśramin.



united with a digit of the moon. How it came to be associated with moon at all they do not choose to explain. Probably they do not know themselves the exact nature of the connection, though they have attempted to explain it in the light of an ancient tradition coming down from the time of the Vedas. Now, *sinī* in the word *Sinīvālī* is taken to mean *candrakalā*; but *sin* from which the feminine *sinī* is obviously derived (cf. Gomin, Gominī; Sarasvat, Sarasvatī) does not denote the moon either in the Vedic language or in classical Sanskrit. The connection between *sinī* and the moon becomes thus utterly unintelligible, if *sinī* is taken to be a pure Vedic word. *Sinī* in the compound term *Sinīvālī* is, as suspected by Tilak nearly a quarter of a century ago, a word of Babylonian extraction being a derivative of *sin* denoting the moon.<sup>156</sup> And *vālī* the second member of the term is derived from the root *vāl* meaning to be united with. *Sinīvālī*, therefore, signifies the night or the presiding deity of the night united with the white streak of the moon. It is now evident that the connection between *Sinīvālī* and the moon alluded to in the later Vedic texts is actually involved in the name of the deity itself.

*Sinīvālī* thus appears really to be a Babylonian deity, thinly disguised in the clothes of the Vedic gods. An attempt may now be made to penetrate her disguise and discover her identity. The Babylonian word *sin* denoted the moon as well as the moon god who begot a daughter called *Ishtar* by his wife *Ningal*. She was the goddess of vegetation and fertility, as noticed already, and became the goddess of love. *Ishtar* is sometimes spoken of in the Babylonian religious literature as a 'horned' goddess, because of the two small horns resembling a crescent which were believed to be upon her head. Assyriologists are divergent in their opinion about their origin; some trace them to *Ishtar's* association with *Venus*, whereas others discover in them the horns of the cow, one of the symbols of the goddess.<sup>157</sup> It must be pointed out, however, that in some of the Babylonian seals, *Ishtar* is associated with the crescent.<sup>158</sup> It is therefore more reasonable, especially in view of her lunar origin, to take the crescent-like horns as the two arms

156. *Bhandarkar Commemoration Volume*, p. 40 n.

157. *Tammus and Ishtar*, pp. 55-6.

158. See Seal No. 3 in the Plate I in Langdon's *Tammus and Ishtar*. Of the three deities represented in the seal *Ishtar* stands in the extreme left facing the deity in the extreme right. The star surmounting the crown of the former leaves no room for doubt about the identity of the goddess. The



of the crescent moon which appears to have been one of the symbols of the Goddess. Now, Ishtar, like Sinivālī, is closely connected with the Babylonian Moon God, Sin, and wears like her a crescent upon her head. Both of them are the Mother Goddesses, sisters of the gods and the queens of mankind. It is not therefore unreasonable to believe that they are identical.

Another Goddess of the Vedic pantheon who bears a striking resemblance to Ishtar, more particularly to her Iranian counterpart, Anāhitā, is Sarasvatī, an associate of Sinivālī, who seems to have played an important part in the religious life of the Aryans. Sarasvatī like her Iranian analogue Anāhitā, was the goddess of fertilizing water (RV, 5.52<sup>6</sup>), a supernatural spring located in the region of heaven.<sup>159</sup> She was the daughter of lightning (RV., 6.49<sup>7</sup>); and she descended from the mountain in the high heaven (5.43<sup>10</sup>), pouring forth her fertilizing waters (7.95<sup>1</sup>). She filled the terrestrial region and the atmosphere and occupied the three worlds (6.62<sup>11</sup>). Sarasvatī was the mother of waters; she was *saptadhātu* (6.62<sup>11</sup>) and had seven sisters;<sup>159a</sup> she removed the sins of her devotees, and purified them by carrying away all their defilements (6.61<sup>9-12</sup>, 1.3<sup>10</sup>, 10.17<sup>10</sup>). She was a kind and dear mother, the best of mothers (*ambitama*) (2.24<sup>16</sup>) who was rich and bountiful and who distributed her gifts with no sparing hand. Her breasts were inexhaustible springs of pleasure by means of which she fed her devotees with choicest things (1.164<sup>19</sup>). She was the store-house of all the powers of life, bestowed vitality upon men (10.30<sup>12</sup>), assisted procreation like Sinivālī and Rākā (10.184<sup>2</sup>) and bestowed, as the mistress of progeny, offspring on her followers (2.41<sup>17</sup>).

Sarasvatī had several husbands, though, in the R̥g Veda she is coupled only with her double, Sarasvat, a God of Tammus affinities, who procured wives to young men desirous of marriage and enabled eager fathers to beget sons (RV 10.96<sup>4-8</sup>). He grew into

crescent in front of her just above her head in line with her crown clearly indicates that it is associated with her. Cf. Milton: "Astarte Queen of heaven with crescent horns."

159. Several attempts have been made to identify the river Sarasvatī but without success. Some scholars believe that the river referred to in the Vedic hymns is the Indus, though the Indus itself is frequently mentioned by its name Sindhu. The failure to identify Sarasvatī satisfactorily is to be attributed mainly to the negligence of scholars to recognise her supernatural origin.

159a. The South Indian Village Goddesses are generally believed to be seven in number.



manhood among holy women like a strong young steer among the cows (7.95<sup>3</sup>). If the hero who is spoken of as Sarasvatī's husband (6.49<sup>7</sup>) were identical with Sarasvat, as maintained by some scholars, he should have been a warlike god, who perhaps helped his wife in her campaigns against the enemies of the gods.<sup>160</sup> Her professional partiality seems to have, however, induced her to accept other paramours. She was a physician, and developed a liking for the Aśvins her fellow physicians whom she helped in restoring to Indra the vitality which he had lost owing to the machinations of the Asura chief Namuci. She accepted their suit and having become, perhaps temporarily, their wife, she bore, as a consequence, a well-formed embryo in her womb (10.131<sup>5</sup>; Vāj. Sam. 19.12.94).

Sarasvatī was also a goddess of war; even the gods, like Indra, invoked her help in their wars with their enemies (RV. 5.61<sup>5</sup>). Dreadful in appearance, she rode in a golden chariot to slay the foes (6.61<sup>7</sup>), put to death the Pārāvatas, and destroyed those that reviled the gods (5.61<sup>2-3</sup>). She allied herself with the Maruts in waging war on the enemies of the Aryans and reduced them to subjection after smiting them on the battle-field (2.30<sup>8</sup>, 10.96<sup>2</sup>). She won from them much booty which she distributed with an unsparing hand among her followers (1.3<sup>10</sup>, 1.164<sup>49</sup>).

Sarasvatī was frequently invoked by the Vedic Ṛṣis together with the other goddesses to attend their sacrifices. She came sometimes in the company of Ilā, Bhārati, Mahī, and others; but more often she accompanied the fathers in a chariot to the sacrificial hall where she took her seat with them on the *barhis* (RV. 1.13<sup>9</sup>, 1.188<sup>8</sup>, 3.4<sup>8</sup>, 9.5<sup>8</sup>). Sarasvatī was perhaps also connected with Vāc, the goddess of speech who was identified with her in later mythology. It is true that she is not, as pointed out by Muir, identified in the R̥g Veda with Vāc; but the facts which ultimately led up to this identification are undoubtedly traceable to it. Like Vāc, Sarasvatī was the originator of the Vedic songs, and the inspirer of the most sublime thoughts which are still considered to embody some of the loftiest ideas ever conceived by the human mind :—

"Inciter of all pleasant songs, inspirer of all gracious thought, Sarasvatī, accept our rite !

"Sarasvatī, the mighty flood,—she with her light illuminates, she brightens every pious thought."

—(RV. 1.3.11-12).<sup>161</sup>

160. Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, V, p. 340, n. 508.

161. Griffith: *R̥g Veda*, I, p. 15.  
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Vāc was associated like Sarasvatī with waters; she dwelt in the waters, in the ocean. She was a queen, a comrade of the gods, roused the order of battle, and assisted Rudra to strike down the people who hated devotion. (RV. 10.125<sup>1-7</sup>). <sup>162</sup>

It is evident that Vāc as well as Sarasvatī was a goddess of fertility; and their identification was probably suggested by the similarity of their character and functions.

The picture presented, in the ancient Iranian scriptures, of Anāhitā is not quite unlike this. Anāhitā was a goddess of fertilizing waters, a supernatural spring situated in heaven; she sprang from the summit of mount Elburz and flowed into the sea of Vourukaṣa. All the rivers of the world had their origin in her, and the mankind as well as the animal kingdom drew their sustenance from her. She was a purifier; she purified the seed of men and cleansed the womb of women, and removed the defilement from the milk of their breasts. She was the patroness of marriages, and helped women at the time of child-birth.

Anāhitā was also a goddess of war; she rode in a chariot drawn by four white steeds, bestowed her favour on heroes, encouraged the combatants to win victory, and enabled them to overthrow the enemies of Mazdaism.<sup>163</sup> She had also a male companion, the god Mithra who played the role of Tammus to her.<sup>164</sup>

A comparison of the foregoing accounts of Sarasvatī and Anāhitā clearly shows that they were both primarily deities of fertility having a similar origin on the summit of a lofty mythical mountain in the high heaven. They were worshipped both as rivers and deities. As rivers they were mothers of waters which filled the earth with numerous tributaries and flowed ultimately into the sea. As deities they bestowed wealth and progeny on their worshippers, enabled men to obtain wives, and women to have easy delivery. Both of them were fond of war; led their followers against the enemies of the Gods and religion, and enabled them to win victories in the battle-field. They had each a male companion, a youthful god of Tammus-like propensities who was nevertheless a brave warrior and powerful destroyer of enemies.

162. Griffiths: *R̥g Veda*, II, pp. 571-2.

163. Martin Haug: *Essays on the Sacred Language of the Parsees*, p. 198. (Aban Yast).

164. Moulton: *Early Zoroastrianism*, pp. 238, 394, n. 3.



The cult of the Mother Goddess was not therefore unknown to the Vedic Aryans. They offered worship to Sinīvālī, the Indian daughter of Sin, the Babylonian Moon God, and the sister-german of Ishtar. They propitiated with sacrifices Sarasvatī and her consort, Sarāsvat, the Indian counterparts of the Iranian Anāhitā and her inseparable companion Mithra. It is obvious that the cult of the Mother Goddess was introduced into India by the Aryans who seem to have adopted it from the Babylonians, when they still inhabited the countries in the neighbourhood of Mesopotamia. Ilā, Mahī, Pṛthvī, Bhārati, Rākā, Guṅgū and other female deities invoked with Sinīvālī and Sarasvatī as well as Ambikā, the mother, sister and spouse of Rudra were the representatives, in all probability, of the Mother Goddess. The connection between Ambikā and Sarasvatī appears to have been specially intimate; for the latter was also known as Ambā and Ambitamā, and was associated like the former with a male deity, who patronised marriages and took delight in warfare.

### His Sons.

Śiva is said to have begotten, according to the Puranic mythology, two sons, Gaṇapati or Vināyaka and Kumāra or Skanda. These sons of Rudra are not however mentioned in the Vedic literature. Gaṇapati, the lord of the Gaṇas, is, no doubt, referred to in the *Satarudrīya* litany;<sup>165</sup> but the name here refers to Rudra himself and not to his son. Another name Vināyaka by which Gaṇapati was known in later ages occurs in the *Atharvaśiropaniṣad*. Here Vināyaka takes rank with the major gods of the Vedic pantheon such as Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Indra, Agni, etc. How the god had actually originated and come to attain the status of a major deity cannot be definitely ascertained, though the *Mānavyagr̥hyasūtra* presents a glimpse of his early history. Vināyaka denotes in this work a group of four evil spirits named Śālakaṭaṅkaṭa, Kūṣmāṇḍarāja-putra, Usmita and Devayajana. They possessed people, caused obstruction to the attainment of their desires and the discharge of their legitimate duties, and brought about the death of children. To free persons from their baneful influence, expiatory ceremonies had to be performed in the prescribed fashion and "food of many sorts, rice, husked and unhusked, flesh and fish, cooked as well as raw, pulse of various kinds, etc., should be put into a basket and the basket placed on the ground where four roads meet, the ground first being covered by Kuśa grass." The Vināyakas were

165. Vāj. Sam. 16. 25. *Namo ganebhyaḥ gaṇapatiḥ śivaḥ*  
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therefore vicious demons who tormented people, and showed no inclination to leave them at peace unless they were compelled to do so by means of exorcism. They were united later into a single deity who was affiliated to Ambikā and Rudra as their son.<sup>166</sup> The Vināyakas resemble Rudra in their malignancy; and the offerings placed at the cross roads in a basket is reminiscent of the *Tryambaka-homa* described in the Yajur Veda Saṁhitā. It was probably this similarity between the characters of Rudra and the Vināyakas which brought them together and assigned to them the roles of father and son in which they appear in the Purāṇas.

A god called Skanda is mentioned in the *Atharvaśiropaniṣad*, but his connection with Śiva or his earlier proto-type Rudra is not specified.<sup>167</sup> Similarly, Kumāra, another name by which Skanda is generally known, occurs much earlier, in the Ṛg Veda and the Brāhmaṇas. In a hymn describing the kindling of the sacrificial fire, it is said that "the youthful mother keeps the Boy (Kumāra) in secret pressed her close, nor yields him to the Father."<sup>168</sup> Kumāra does not denote here Skanda, the son of Śiva, but the fire god Agni. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* discloses the names of Agni's parents and the circumstances in which he was born.

"This foundation," according to the account given in the Brāhmaṇa, "existed. It became the earth (*bhūmi*). He (Prajāpati) extended it (*upradhaya*). On this foundation, beings and the lord of beings (*bhūtāni bhūtānāñcapatiḥ*), consecrated themselves for the year (*samvatsara*). The lord of beings (*bhūtānāmpati*) was a householder, and Uṣas was his wife. . . . Then both those beings and that lord of beings, the Year, impregnated Uṣas, and a boy (Kumāra) was born."<sup>169</sup>

The boy that was thus born was none other than Agni himself. Prajāpati bestowed upon the infant God eight names—Rudra, Śarva, Paśupati, Ugra, Aśani, Bhava, Mahādeva, and Īśāna, which

166. Bhandarkar: *Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism*, pp. 147-8.

167. *Yo vai Rudraḥ sa bhagavān yaś ca Skandaḥ tasmai vai namo namaḥ.*  
—Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, IV, p. 357.

168. RV. 5.21 (Griffith: *Ṛg Veda*, I, p. 466).

169. SB. 6.1.37-8 (Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, IV, pp. 330-31).

Similar stories about the birth of Agni are narrated in the Taitt. Saṁ. and the Brāhmaṇas. They do not, however, refer to the young god as Kumāra.



are said to represent eight forms of Agni; and he added a ninth, Kumāra, thereby making Agni *trivṛttā*.<sup>170</sup>

Here also Kumāra denotes Agni, and not Śiva's son Skanda-Kumāra. Nevertheless, it is in these Vedic texts that we catch the earliest glimpses of the later war-god in his embryonic state; the incidents of his birth and some of the names such as Kumāra, Agnibhūh, Śarajanmā, Kārttikeya, and Senānī by which he is known clearly indicate that before his differentiation into a separate deity and affiliation to Śiva and Pārvatī as their son, Skanda-Kumāra was closely associated with Agni. He was born, according to the story embodied in the Purāṇas, under abnormal circumstances.

Briefly narrated, the story of Kumāra's birth as described in the Purāṇas is this. The Gods who were sorely beset by Tāraka, approached Śiva with a request that he should give them a commander capable of destroying the demon. Śiva agreed. To implement his promise, he married Umā and began to procreate for a long time without effect. The gods having lost patience sent Agni to remind him of his promise. Annoyed beyond measures at the unwelcome intrusion, Śiva discharged upon Agni the seed intended for Umā's womb. Groaning under its weight, the latter made at first an unsuccessful attempt to deposit the precious burden in the celestial Gaṅgā; next, he proceeded to the lake Śaravaṇa where on perceiving the wives of the Seven Ṛṣis, he was smitten with love; and when all of them excepting Arundhatī, came to him believing him to be mere fire, he embraced them, and penetrating into their wombs deposited therein the seed of Śiva. They became pregnant forthwith. Fearing the wrath of their husbands, they forcibly ejected the seed from their wombs, and placing it on a lotus leaf in the lake, returned to their homes. The Ṛṣis, however, were not deceived; irate with their spouses for their unworthy conduct, they cast them out without compunction.

The unhappy women then repaired to the court of Brahmā and complained to him of their cruel fate. The father of the gods took pity on them, and assigned to them a permanent place in the heavens by converting them into a constellation known as the *Kṛttikās*. Meanwhile, the foetus left by the wives of the Ṛṣis in the lake grew up to be a boy with six heads, twelve eyes and twelve arms. He was named Kumāra, and became, in course of time, the Commander of the Gods.



This in brief is the legend describing Skanda-Kumāra's birth in some of the Śaiva purāṇas. An earlier version of the legend embodied in the Mahābhārata gives a somewhat different account. Agni fell in love with the wives of the Seven Ṛṣis, and being unable to attain the object of his love resolved in despair to give up his corporeal form. Svāhā, one of Dakṣa's daughters, who was enamoured of Agni took advantage of the opportunity, appeared before him in the guise of the wives of the six out of the seven Ṛṣis, for she could not assume the divine form of Aurodhatī, the wife of Vasiṣṭha, and had intercourse with him in succession. She repaired, every time after her union with Agni, to the top of an inaccessible mountain, and threw there in a golden reservoir, his seed, out of which arose in course of time a son with six heads, twelve ears, eyes, arms and feet united to a single body and neck. While still a babe of four days, he split the Krauñca hill, demolished one of the peaks of the Śveta mountain, and caused a great commotion in Svarga. The Ṛṣis, who learnt from the panic-stricken gods that the cause of their trouble was the son born to their wives through their illicit intercourse with Agni, cast them off. In course of time, the boy became a mighty hero and was formally invested in the presence of the assembled gods, including Śiva, with the insignia of his office; and his marriage with Devasenā was duly celebrated. The wives of the six Ṛṣis who had been abandoned unjustly by their husbands then came to him, and having explained their sad plight begged him to provide them with some place in heaven. Kumāra took pity on them and persuaded Indra to accommodate them in the neighbourhood of Rohiṇī in the place vacated by Abhijit who had gone to perform austerities. Thenceforward these six wives of the Ṛṣis shone in the sky under the name of Kṛttikās with Agni as their presiding deity.<sup>171</sup>

These are the main incidents of the story as narrated in the Mahābhārata. Although Śiva has no place in the story, he is smuggled into it surreptitiously by some redactor who introduces him as one of the visitors to Indra's court at the time of Kumāra's investiture and explains parenthetically the reasons for his presence. The Brahmins, he states, identify Agni with Rudra. The seed discharged by Agni-Rudra which grew into a white mountain was tended by the Kṛttikās and Kārttikeya (Kumāra) was born. Here is a clumsy attempt to remodel an old legend pertaining to Agni-Rudra and graft it on Śiva, his later representative.<sup>172</sup>

171. Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, p. 350 (MBh., III, 228, 229).

172. *Ibid.* CC-0. Jangamwadi Math Collection. Digitized by eGangotri



The germs out of which these legends grew are found scattered in the Vedic literature; and the incidents narrated in the Puranic legends mentioned above are there associated with the birth of the God Agni-Rudra himself. Like Skanda-Kumāra, Agni-Rudra was born out of the discharged seed collected in a golden vessel.<sup>173</sup>

The Kṛttikās were connected with Agni from very early times. He is described in the Yajur Veda as their *adhidevata* or the presiding deity.<sup>174</sup> In the Ekāgnikāṇḍa it is stated that the Seven Ṛṣis made Arundhatī among the Seven Kṛttikās firm and constant and that the remaining six accepted her superiority.<sup>175</sup> The variable character of the Kṛttikās excluding Arundhatī together with their connection with Agni, their *adhidevata*, must have furnished the *aitihāsikas* mentioned in the commentary on the Ekāgnikāṇḍa with the idea of unchastity of the six Kṛttikās and their adulterous intercourse with Agni.

The birth of Skanda-Kumāra in the reed-pond (*śaravaṇa*) also finds its parallel in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. Agni, according to a legend preserved in the later Saṁhitās, and Brāhmaṇas, went away from the gods lest he should perish like his brothers while carrying oblations to them and took refuge in the waters.<sup>175a</sup> This is confirmed by the evidence of the Ṛg Veda which records a dialogue between Agni and the Gods where the latter attempt to persuade him to leave his hiding place and resume his duties, promising him a long life and a share in the sacrifices.<sup>176</sup> In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, it is stated, that he concealed himself on this occasion within the hollow of the reed, and believed that it was to him like his mother's womb:—

“Agni went away from the Gods; he entered into a reed, whence it is hollow, and whence inside it is, as it were, smoke tinged: (thus) that the reed is Agni's womb; and Agni is these cattle; and the womb does not in-

173. KB. p. 337. (Keith's trans.).

174. *Ibid.*, 4.10.1.

175. Ekāgnikāṇḍa, I, 9. *Sapta ṛṣayaḥ prathamām Kṛttikānām Arundhatīm | yad dhruvatām haninyuh | saṭ Kṛttikā mukhyayogam vahanā | iyaṁ asmākam edhatvaṣṭamī.*

175a. Taitt. Saṁ. 2.6.6.1

176. RV. 10.52<sup>5-7</sup> (Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, V, pp. 202-03).



jure the child; for it is from a womb that he who is born is born: 'from the womb he (Agni) shall be born when he is born,' thus he thinks."<sup>177</sup>

This incident appears to have been the nucleus around which the legend of Skanda-Kumāra's birth in the Śaravaṇa grew up later.

Skanda-Kumāra was not the first generalissimo of the Gods. An earlier incumbent of this office is referred to in the Rāmāyaṇa. When Śiva was engaged in performing austerities, the Gods who were consequently left without a commander capable of leading their forces against the Asuras, repaired to Brahmā, and requested him to appoint another general in the place vacated by Śiva.<sup>178</sup> There is however no evidence to show that Śiva had ever assumed the command over the celestial army. Nevertheless, the statement attributed to the gods contains an element of truth. Though Śiva never commanded the celestial forces, his earlier counterpart, Rudra, led them against the Three Cities, and Agni, the double of the latter, appears to have commanded them in their wars against the Asuras. Agni put to flight the Asuras and Rākṣasas and destroyed them (R.V. 3.15.1, 7.15.10, 8.23.13-14. He demolished the cities and distinguished himself by several other exploits (R.V. 7.6.2). He waged war on behalf of the gods and conquered for them much wealth or territory (1.59.5); he was a hero of thousand engagements (1.188.1) and saved the gods from disaster (7.13.2). Such was the prowess of Agni that even the gods were afraid of him and paid him homage. He became consequently the sole commander of the gods and was known among them as *senānī* or the commander and the house where the sacrificial Agni was kept as the *senānīgṛha* or the dwelling of the commander of the army.

"Having taken up both (the Gārhapatya and the Āhavanīya) fires on the two kindling sticks, he goes to the house of the commander of the army, and prepares a cake on eight potsherds for

177. SB. 6.3.1.<sup>20</sup>, (Eggeling SBE, xli, p. 198). A slightly different account is given in 6.3 31-32, where Agni is said to have taken refuge not in the hollow of the reed-grass but in that of bamboo. The bamboo instead of the reed is spoken of as the womb of Agni.

178. Rāmāyaṇa (Kumbakonam edn.) Bāla. 34.3.

*yo naḥ senāpatir deva datto bhagavatā purā  
sa tapah param āsthāya tapyate sma sahomayā*



Agni Anīkavat; for Agni is the head (*anīka*) of the gods, and commander is the head of the army".<sup>179</sup>

The interpretation of the word '*anīka*' as 'the head' is not quite appropriate in this context; for, according to this interpretation, *anīkavat* means 'he who has the head,' and not 'he who is the head of the gods.' *Anīka* may be rendered with greater reason as 'force or army;' and Agni-Anīkavat would then mean Agni, the commander of the army of the Gods, which is the sense required here.

Agni-Rudra and Skanda-Kumāra are thus seen to possess several characteristics in common. They arose out of the discharged seed collected in a golden bowl or reservoir; and were intimately connected with the Kṛttikās. They emerged from the embryonic condition assuming the multi-headed and multi-limbed form of an infant deity among the reeds growing in the waters, and took charge of the supreme command of the celestial army which they led victoriously against the enemies of the Gods. The resemblance between the two deities is not accidental. It is due to their fundamental identity. Skanda-Kumāra as a matter of fact was not altogether a new deity who came into being for the first time during the post-Vedic age. He emanated from Agni-Rudra, and had taken over from him some of his functions which he could not continue to perform owing to changes that came over the fortunes of the Vedic Gods. With the rise of pantheistic philosophy which ultimately found its expression in the Upaniṣads, the ritualistic religion of the Vedas suffered a gradual decline, and the gods of the Vedic pantheon had either to adjust themselves to the conditions of the new faith, or disappear completely yielding place to deities who might be more in harmony with the trend of current beliefs. Of all the gods of the Veda, Rudra showed himself capable of the greatest possible adjustment. He readily divested himself of some of his undesirable characteristics, cast off Agni, his time-honoured second self, and concealed his terrible nature under the auspicious name of Śiva which he found desirable to adopt. He soon rose to prominence, overshadowed the other gods, ousted Prajāpati from his exalted place, and asserted his supremacy over the universe. Some of the old legends describing his birth and achievements had to be recast as they were incongruous with his new position. A supreme God according to the new ideas was *ananta* or endless; and he was not subject to birth and death; nor was it possible for him to play a subordinate role and accept service



under his own creatures. Therefore, when the old legends recounting the circumstances of the birth of Agni-Rudra were taken up for remodelling, Śiva was substituted in the place of Prajāpati. Agni who was now completely dissociated from Rudra was transformed into a vehicle to convey the seed of Śiva to the Gaṅgā, and the Kṛttikās, and the infant-god that was born to them was named Kumāra after Agni; and the supreme command over the celestial army which belonged to the latter was at the same time transferred to him.



## CHAPTER 6

### *Śiva's achievements.*

(i) *Destruction of the Sacrifice.*—One of the most important achievements ascribed to Śiva in the Purāṇas is the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice. The Prajāpati Dakṣa, according to the legend described in the latest Purāṇas, had several daughters of whom the eldest, Satī, he gave in marriage to Śiva. On one occasion when Dakṣa paid a visit to the court of Kailāsa, Śiva treated him with disrespect and failed to show him the courtesy due to a father-in-law from his son-in-law. Dakṣa bore the insult calmly and departed. As soon as he reached his place, he proclaimed a sacrifice to which he invited all the gods excepting Śiva. Satī learnt accidentally from the gods that her father was performing a sacrifice ; and though neither she nor her husband was invited, she resolved to attend the function despite the remonstrances of her august lord. When she arrived at the sacrificial hall, Dakṣa insulted her by speaking disparagingly of Śiva. Satī was indignant, and unable to control her shame and sorrow she burnt herself to death. The tragic news of Satī's death soon reached Kailāsa, and Śiva whose wrath blazed out resolved to punish Dakṣa for his insolent conduct. He despatched at once Virabhadra, a terrific deity who emanated from his anger, together with a host of his *gaṇas* with instructions to proceed to the place of Dakṣa's sacrifice and disturb the ceremonial and slay Dakṣa as well as the gods who gathered there for the function. Virabhadra set out accordingly with the weird band of his followers, and reached his destination without delay. He destroyed the sacrifice, put Dakṣa to death, blinded Bhaga, pulled out the teeth of Sūrya, cut off the nose of Sarasvatī, wounded and maimed the other Gods and subjected them to various indignities. The terrified gods prayed to Śiva and humbly entreated him to free them from the hands of his *gaṇas*. Śiva's wrath was finally appeased, he liberated the Gods, repaired the injury done to the sacrifice, and even restored Dakṣa to life.

The main features of this legend are found in the Vedic literature. Dakṣa is mentioned several times in the Ṛg Veda. He was the father, son, as well as the husband of Aditi ; and occasion-



ally he is also spoken of as the parent or progenitor of the gods.<sup>180</sup> The Brāhmaṇas also mention Dakṣa as a Prajāpati and a sacrificer. It is stated in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* that the Dākṣāyaṇī sacrifice was so called because it was first performed by Prajāpati Dakṣa, and later on by king Dakṣa Pārvaṭi whose descendants, the Brāhmaṇa incidentally remarks, were in possession of royal dignity at the time of its composition, in virtue of the performance of the sacrifice by their ancestor.<sup>181</sup> The *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* which also gives an account of the above sacrifice mentions only Dakṣa Pārvaṭi but makes no reference to its institution by the Prajāpati Dakṣa.<sup>182</sup> It is not stated whether Dakṣa had any daughters. The *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, no doubt, alludes to Prajāpati's daughters, thirty-two in number, all of whom had been given in marriage to Soma, the Moon. Who this Prajāpati was, the Brāhmaṇa does not say. Even if he were taken to be identical with Dakṣa, it would be difficult to find a place among them for the wife of Śiva, as all of them had already married Soma. Śiva's marriage with the daughter of Dakṣa seems to be an incident comparatively recent in its origin; for though the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice is described in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, they do not even remotely allude to Umā's parentage, or Dakṣa's relationship to her. Kālidāsa, however, states definitely that Satī, the former wife of Śiva and the daughter of Dakṣa, abandoned her body owing to the insult offered by her father.<sup>183</sup> Therefore, the episode of Śiva's marriage with Dakṣa's daughter appears to have taken shape sometime subsequent to the age of the Mahābhārata.

180. RV. 10.714-5 Aditi is represented as Dakṣa's wife in certain texts (10.57).

*Asca ca saca parame vyoman Dakṣasya janmann Aditer upasthe |  
Agnir naḥ prathamajāḥ ṛtasya pūrve āyuni vṛṣabhaśca dhenuḥ*

This is confirmed by 8.25<sup>5</sup> which refers to the Ādityas, Mitra and Varuṇa as the two sons of Dakṣa (*śūnū Dakṣasya sukratū*). In 10.64<sup>5</sup>, it is stated that Aditi bore by the will of Dakṣa, Mitra and Varuṇa and tended them.

The gods are also referred to now and then (6.50,<sup>2</sup> 7.66<sup>3</sup>) as Dakṣa-pitṛ which the commentator explains as *Dakṣaḥ prajāpatir-utpādako eṣām te*. Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, pp. 50-52.

181. SB. 2.4.4.1-2

182. KB. 4.4.

183. Kumārasambhavam, canto I, v. 21;

*Athāvamānena piṭuḥ prayuktā Dakṣasya kanyā Bhavapūrvapatnī  
Satī satī yoga viśṣṭa dehā tām janmane śailavadhūm prapede.*



Śiva's exclusion from Dakṣa's sacrifice is, on the contrary, supported by Vedic evidence. 'The Gods,' it is said, 'excluded Rudra from the sacrifice.' Thereupon, he is said to have pierced it;<sup>184</sup> but the cause for Rudra's attack on the sacrifice is described differently in another place. Prajāpati who was the embodiment of the sacrifice had intercourse with his own daughter Uṣas; and those who beheld it were scandalised. To destroy the evil consequence of his incestuous conduct, they put together their most fearful forms and created a new being whom they named Bhūtavān (i.e., Rudra) and commanded him to pierce him. He loyally carried out the behests of his creators and pierced him. When Prajāpati was hit by the arrow shot by Bhūtavān, he poured forth his sperm which flowed upon the earth<sup>185</sup>. The causes for the piercing of the sacrifice are thus described variously in the Vedic literature. Nevertheless, the legend of Rudra's exclusion gained ground and was woven into the story of Dakṣa under sectarian influences. The chastisement meted out by Śiva to some of the Gods who attended Dakṣa's sacrifice is similarly based upon incidents mentioned in connection with the piercing of the sacrifice in the Vedic literature. The gods, according to the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* gathered round the sacrifice after it had been pierced by Rudra; and in their anxiety not to waste any part of the pierced sacrifice, they offered the small bit injured by Rudra's arrow to Pūṣan who ate it and lost as a consequence all his teeth.<sup>186</sup> The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* gives some more details. The injured portion of the sacrifice was at first taken round to Bhaga who looked at it and lost his eyes; next, it was passed on to Pūṣan; he tasted it and lost his teeth.<sup>187</sup> These incidents were skilfully twisted and turned to the advantage of their own creed by later sectarian writers who never hesitated to degrade the Vedic deities, in their attempts to enhance the glory of Śiva and establish his supremacy over the other Gods of the Hindu pantheon.

(ii) *Destruction of the Three Cities.*—Another important feat attributed to Śiva in the classical Sanskrit literature is the destruction of the three cities belonging to the Asuras. The circumstances in which Śiva came into conflict with the Asuras and overthrew their cities are briefly these. After the death of the Asura Tāraka

184. Taitt. Saṃh. 2.6.8.

185. AB. 3.3.33.

186. Taitt. Saṃh. 2.6.8.

187. SB. 1.7.4.6.



or Tārakākṣa his three sons secured, as a consequence of the severe penance they performed, boons which made them invincible. The three cities where they severally inhabited should be immune from attack, and have the power to wander at will over the world. They should each be provided with a pond, capable of restoring to life the dead people thrown in it. The cities should be united after the lapse of a thousand years; and none excepting a god with the power to overthrow them by means of a single arrow should be able to bring about their destruction. Having obtained these boons, the three Asuras took possession of the cities built for them by the Asura architect, Maya, and began to harass the world. The gods were non-plussed. They repaired to Brahmā and requested him to show them a way to overcome the Asura. Brahmā said that this could be effected only by Śiva who alone among the gods was capable of satisfying the conditions of the boon granted by him. They next proceeded to the Kailāsa with Brahmā at their head and requested Śiva to undertake the enterprise. Though Śiva consented to make an attack upon the Asuras, he felt diffident about his power to accomplish the deed without assistance. The Gods readily agreed to render him whatever help they could and provided him with a chariot made of the earth, mountains, rivers, etc., a bow shaped out of Mount Meru, and an arrow composed of Agni, Soma and Viṣṇu. Equipped in this manner, Śiva mounted the chariot which, driven by Brahmā, reached quickly its destination. As soon as he arrived in the neighbourhood of the Asura cities, he took aim and shot the arrow which at once reduced them to ashes.

Śiva was not in truth the author of this victory. He took credit for an act for which his predecessors, Agni and Rudra, were originally responsible. It was mainly through their help that the gods freed themselves from the tyranny of the Asuras; and the manner in which they effected the destruction of the Asura cities is clearly described in several places in the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas. In one of the hymns of the R̥g Veda, Agni is said to have destroyed the castles (6.16<sup>39</sup>, 7.6<sup>2</sup>). This is taken, by the commentator, to be an allusion to the destruction of the three Asura cities.<sup>188</sup> The *Vājasaneyi Samhitā* mentions that the body of Agni encased in *ayas*, silver and gold chased away the evil (Vāj. Sam. 5.8). To explain this passage, the commentators cite an *ākhyāna* or story according to which the Asuras being vanquished in battle per-

188. Muir : *Original Sanskrit Texts*, IV, p. 312.



formed *tapas* and built three *puras* or castles, one of *loha* (copper) on the earth; of *rajata* (silver) in the atmosphere, and of *hariṇi* (gold) in heaven.<sup>189</sup> The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* which mentions the same story states that the construction of these castles excited the jealousy of the gods; they sat around them, performed the *upasad* (siege) ceremonies, and overthrew the cities by means of a thunderbolt of which Agni was the shaft, Soma the *śalya*, and Viṣṇu the point (3.4.4.3). The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* gives a slightly different account. The Asuras made the earth, the air and the sky into castles of *ayas*, *rajata*, and *hariṇi*. The Gods having resolved to counteract them made the earth an assembly hall (*sadas*), the air a fire-altar, and the sky a receptacle of oblations. They then observed the *upasad* ceremonies, and having prepared an arrow with Agni as the shaft, Soma as the *śalya*, Viṣṇu as the point, and Varuṇa as the feathers, discharged it by means of the bow made of *ājya* (A.B. 1.23.25). The *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* which is perhaps the earliest of the later Saṁhitās introduces certain new elements. It does not refer to the three worlds where the three Asura castles were respectively built; but mentions in their place the three castles, the lowest of *ayas*, then of *rajata*, then of *hariṇi*. The gods who were desirous of conquering the Asuras made an arrow with Agni as its wooden shaft, Soma, its *śalya* and Viṣṇu as its point, and chose Rudra, because of his cruel character, as the archer best fitted to discharge the missile. Rudra accepted the commission, and taking aim he let fly the arrow upon the Asura castles and reduced them to ashes.

The legend of the destruction of the three Asura castles thus appears to have been quite familiar to the Vedic bards. It seems to have had its origin in some of the attributes ascribed to Agni in the hymns of Ṛg Veda, and was later developed into an important episode in the interminable wars between the Devas and Asuras. In some of the versions of the legend mentioned above the gods themselves are represented to have destroyed the Asura castles without commissioning any one in particular to do the work. Agni and Rudra, according to others, are said to have been deputed to overthrow them as the gods could not themselves effect their capture. The classical writers of the Puranic age took hold of this legend, and adapted it to Śiva with modifications necessary to enhance his greatness.

189. Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, II, pp. 380-81.



The line of enquiry chalked out for the present course of lectures is now complete. The main conclusions reached during the preceding discussion may now be briefly recapitulated. A comparison of the characteristics of Śiva and Rudra shows that the former was not originally the deity of some pre-Aryan savage tribe who rose to prominence as a consequence of the fusion of the religious beliefs of the non-Aryan and Aryan peoples, but a magnified copy of Agni-Rudra; and he became supreme owing to new developments within the Vedic religion itself. The demonic qualities of Śiva such as his predilection for the company of goblins and the residence in the *śmaśāna* are to be attributed to his identity with Rudra, the Vedic god of death and destruction. His skill in medicine as well as his benevolence and liberality are traceable to the same source. Although Śiva and Rudra generally resembled each other in their personal appearance, the former had certain peculiarities, such as the third eye, skull-necklace, moon crest, etc., which distinguished him from the latter. These, however, had their origin in some attribute or personal adornment of Rudra which were later transformed out of recognition on account of ignorance or theological bias. Rudra's identity with Agni which is frequently alluded to in the Vedic literature exercised considerable influence on his character, and provided him with necessary equipment for playing the role of Śiva-Mahādeva, the supreme lord of the universe. Rudra and through him Śiva acquired from Agni not only some of his characteristic features, such as his complexion, blue-neck, braided hair, etc., but also his offspring. Śiva similarly appropriated some of the achievements of Agni, and took over from him his emblem, *liṅga*, which grew literally out of the sacrificial fire-pit. All the characteristics which are supposed to be the hallmark of Dravidism are thus definitely traceable to the Vedas. There are therefore no valid grounds for presuming a non-Aryan origin for the Puranic Śiva.

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